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OLGA ZANELLI

OLGA ZANELLI

A Tale of an Imperial City

BY

FAIRFAX L. CARTWRIGHT

" . . . dans cette vie

Rien n'est bon que d'aimer n'est vrai que de souffrir "

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OLGA ZANELLI.

CHAPTER XXIX.

SEVERAL months elapsed before the fate of Heinrich Lazarus and his companions was decided. The trial lasted a considerable time, and roused much interest. Every day Olga Zanelli was in court listening attentively to the evidence, and never failing to applaud when the able advocate she had engaged made a point in favour of her cousin. It was wearisome work spending the whole day in the stuffy court listening to interminable cross examinations of witnesses, or to stormy wrangles between the lawyers ; but she stuck to her purpose, continuing her attendance as if to do so were a religious duty, for she felt that her presence cheered Heinrich who was now abandoned by everybody. At last the end came ; it was evident to every one that these young men had been engaged in conspiring against the State, and in accordance with the evidence a verdict of guilty was returned.

Johann Schmalz, the president of the secret society,

was the first to come up for judgment. On account of his being older than his companions, and because he ought to have known better than to engage in senseless conspiracies, he received the heaviest penalty: he was condemned to two years' imprisonment. On hearing his sentence pronounced the retired tradesman wept aloud, and made vain appeals to the mercy of the court, but his cowardice only gained him the contempt of his companions and of the audience. The other conspirators, on account of their youth, were condemned to shorter terms of imprisonment; they received their sentences with apparent indifference, and no doubt they thought they were imitating thereby the fortitude of ancient Spartans. The judge, taking into consideration the youth and enthusiastic nature of Heinrich Lazarus, and the fact that his father held the honourable position of a court chaplain, passed the lenient sentence of a few months' imprisonment upon him, and at the same time gave him a severe lecture on the foolishness of his conduct.

With many tears Lolo took leave of her cousin, who felt more depressed by his hopeless love for her than by the prospect of having to spend the next few months in prison. A strong force of police entered the court, and removed the twenty odd prisoners to the closed vans which were waiting for them outside; the lawyers gathered up their papers, and the judge having retired the ushers began clearing the court. The great conspiracy case was over; in the solitary confinement of a State prison the visionary and enthusiastic members of the secret society which was

to regenerate Germany could now meditate over the foolishness of knocking one's head against a wall.

When Court Chaplain Lazarus heard of the sentence which had been passed upon his son he put his hand upon his heart, and exclaimed with fervour : "The law has been vindicated ; I am satisfied : henceforth let no one mention his name, for he is dead to me ;" and his simple wife looked at him with awe, overcome with admiration at the calm and noble manner in which he bore his trial, and no doubt the worthy parson compared himself in his own mind to Junius Brutus condemning his sons to death.

Lolo drove home enervated and sick at heart, but nevertheless feeling a certain satisfaction at knowing that it was due to her efforts that his sentence had not been heavier. On reaching her apartment she found a letter to her address lying on her table. Thinking that it was only an invitation to some supper she took no further notice of it till she had taken off her things and rested a little. She then opened it carelessly, as if the idea of having to answer it bored her ; but when she had read it through she petulantly threw it on the floor, exclaiming that it was abominable that she should be exposed to receiving such communications.

It was the threatening letter written by Count Immersdorf, but which had been kept back for a few months as the Count had accidentally had a run of luck at cards ; but his good fortune had not lasted very long, and he had had eventually to fall back to this criminal method to obtain money. The letter was worded as follows :—

“MADAM,—We who write are poor wretches to whom fortune has been adverse. We see no prospect of bettering our position in this country, and our eyes are therefore longingly turned towards that Eldorado for poor men—America. Alas ! our means are not such as to allow us to get there ; we therefore appeal to your kindness of heart to help us in our adversity, and to save us from being perhaps compelled to take to a criminal life. The sum we require to enable us to reach and to get a fair start in that distant land is £1,000. We feel sure that you will not deny us out of your abundance this small sum, but which seems to us poor fellows so large a fortune and which is of such vital importance to ourselves. We would ask you to be so kind as to send the above sum in banknotes, addressed, ‘Sigma,’ care of Hans Krüger, Hairdresser, — strasse, Berlin.

“We feel certain that you will comply at once with our humble request ; but should you be so ill-advised as to refuse, we shall be compelled in our own interest to take the following steps. We shall inform Count Klinkenstein that you have been repeatedly faithless to him, and we shall supply him with several letters in your handwriting addressed to various persons and making appointments to meet them. Ladies in your position do not habitually enjoy a reputation for steadiness, and we have no reason to suppose that Count Klinkenstein will not believe our assertions. Suspicion is easily implanted in the mind of a lover, and we are certain that you will find it more convenient to part with the small sum we ask for than to incur the probability of frequent and disagreeable

quarrels with your lover, or to run the risk of perhaps losing his custom altogether.

“ If we have written anything in this letter which can cause you annoyance or pain, we sincerely hope that you will accept our humble apologies for it, and excuse the clumsiness of our language, as it is far from our thoughts to do anything which could be disagreeable to so pretty a woman as yourself. Our only object is to inculcate charity, for is it not the duty of the rich to provide for the wants of the poor ? We feel sure that your kind heart will be touched by our appeal, and that in a few days you will have complied with our request ; and believe us, madam, your humble petitioners will ever after pray for your happiness and prosperity.”

The letter was unsigned.

“ If they had merely asked for the money, I might have given it to them,” said Lolo to herself ; “ but I will not let myself be bullied by threats. The men who wrote this letter are blackguards, and not poor people in real want of money. I shall not pay them a penny, and they may write whatever they like to Edward. I will show him the letter directly he comes home. It is intolerable to be worried in this way. Men who write such letters ought to be severely punished ; they are infinitely greater criminals than those foolish boys who played at revolutionists, and were sent to prison for doing so little. I wish Edward would come. It is always so ; troubles never come singly ; as if I had not had enough for one day with Heinrich condemned to prison, I must now be worried with this abominable letter. It is really too bad.”

She sighed, lay down on the sofa, and felt inclined to cry. It seemed so long to have to wait for Count Klinkenstein with all this trouble on her mind, and of which she was so anxious to disburden herself; she longed for sympathetic ears into which to pour her woes, and to receive afterwards a kiss from loving lips as a consolation.

Presently the house bell rang.

"Here he is!" she exclaimed, jumping up and going forward to meet him.

A footman entered, and introduced Count Immersdorf.

"My dear Olga Zanelli," said the Count, making a profound bow, "I was passing your door, and it was impossible for me to deny myself the pleasure of stepping up to inquire after your health."

Lolo was taken aback; she did not expect his visit, and for a moment she was too confused to answer. She disliked Count Immersdorf at all times, and doubly so at a moment when she felt so keenly the want of a sympathetic person to talk to.

"Take a seat," she said to her visitor as soon as she had somewhat recovered from her momentary confusion. She threw herself back on the couch, from which she had so suddenly risen on hearing the bell ring, and the Count, suiting his action to her words, took a chair and seated himself very close to her.

"Nothing makes me happier, my dear Olga, than to sit by your side. But you look tired to-day; you really must take more care of yourself, or we shall have you falling ill. That would never do. What would all your admirers say if they heard that the

pretty Olga Zanelli was ill? You should have a little pity on them."

"I have no admirers but Count Klinkenstein," she answered rather sharply, thinking all the time of the odious imputations in the letter. She hated Count Immersdorf, and she was hoping that he would cut his visit short, for she remembered the ardent declarations of love he had made the night of Count Bernstein's supper party, and she felt afraid that he might repeat them, and even make use of his opportunity to take liberties.

"No admirers!" exclaimed Count Immersdorf; "how cruel you are, my dear young lady, to say so, and especially to me, who am always thinking of you." The threatening letter was lying on the floor where Lolo had thrown it in her anger; Count Immersdorf recognised it at once, and picking it up he handed it to her. "The letter of an admirer, perhaps more fortunate than myself," he said with a wicked smile. "My dear Olga, you ought indeed to be more careful with such missives, and not leave them about like this. Unscrupulous persons might get hold of such documents and make a miserable use of them."

"I am not afraid of what people write to me," she answered, proudly; "I hide nothing from Count Klinkenstein, to whom alone I am answerable for my conduct. When men are foolish enough to send me love letters I show them to him, and when we have read them together and laughed at their contents we throw them into the fire."

"You do not feel flattered at receiving from men such tokens of admiration?"

"Certainly not, for the love letters which men write are too foolish to arouse in one anything but a sense of ridicule."

"My dear Olga, you are very hard upon the poor creatures whom you have driven to distraction by your cruelty; but as you do not seem to approve of written declarations of love, may I ask whether you also object to them when they are made orally?"

"It would make no difference."

"How prettily, to be sure, women can lie," remarked the Count, with a cynical laugh; "I have had much experience of the world, my dear Olga, and I am not to be deceived by fine phrases and bombast sentiment. I think I understand women as well as any one, and I can assure you that their one desire is to play truant to their lord and master, and to go in search of the forbidden fruit."

Lolo shrugged her shoulders, and gave a look of contempt at her visitor.

"It is no use denying, my dear Olga, what all the philosophers in the world have asserted to be the case. Women like excitement, and hate monotony. What can be more monotonous or more insipid than to be continually engaged in dual conversation with a man, and to be intimately acquainted with every peculiarity of his physical organisation? No intelligent woman can stand that; she wants variety and surprises; she longs for change; she pines for the unknown. The true philosophy for a beautiful woman to adopt is therefore to make the most of her opportunities, taking precautions all the time not to let

the individual who claims her as his own from suspecting her enterprise. What the rest of the world says does not matter in the least so long as it is merely founded on surmise. If a man of experience may give so pretty a woman as yourself any advice in these matters, it is to part with everything you possess rather than let Count Klinkenstein suspect you of any irregularities, but at the same time commit them."

"Count, if you mean to be insulting, the sooner you go the better, for your company certainly gives me no pleasure."

"You are indeed very cruel, my dear Olga. Why do you wish to drive me away when you know that I love you? Is it an insult to a woman to tell her that she is pretty, or that men are strangely affected by her beauty? Trust me, my dear Olga, women like such insults, and would be very sorry if they were never exposed to them."

"You judge all women by those you have known, and perhaps they are not of very high quality."

"The nature of women is the same whatever their social position may be, and when you have removed the embroidered robes of a duchess you will find that her thoughts will run in the same direction as those of the humble village maiden."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, my dear Olga, so it is; and the only reason why some innocent persons still believe in the immaculate virtue of the sex is due to the inborn tact and discretion of women, by means of which they generally succeed in evading discovery. It is not

the act but the being caught which is considered so great a sin by the world."

Lolo took up a book which was lying by her side, and began turning over the leaves.

"Nothing makes a woman blush so much as when one tells her the truth," continued the Count, undisturbed by Lolo's cold manner. "Now, my dear Olga, you are a woman with artistic instincts ; that is to say, that at times your thoughts need to wander into the realm of the ideal. The contemplation of Cupids, Apollos, and other lovely creatures is a necessity of your nature, therefore the daily sight of Count Klinkenstein must be disappointing to you, for he would certainly be out of place in Olympus, though he may make a very good officer of the Guards."

"I will not hear anything said against him," replied Lolo, getting very angry.

"I do not think I have said anything to which your friend Count Klinkenstein would take objection ; he would not give up being an officer of the Guards to enter Olympus, of that you may be sure. Such being the case, how, then, can your imagination be satisfied. Only in one way : by doing what all women in your position do. It is not that I believe that other men are in any way better than your Count, but they have the great advantage over him of being thought better, because you do not know them so thoroughly. Precise knowledge is perfect poison to imaginative flights. What qualities can we not endow a lover with, so long as we do not know him too well ? How can love exist where there are no surprises left ?"

“That is not the case,” replied Lolo ; “and I would not exchange Count Klinckenstein for any other man I know.”

“You would indeed be foolish, my dear Olga, if you did. It is not every day that one is lucky enough to carry out so brilliant a mercantile transaction as to secure a Count Klinckenstein, and then to retain him by one’s side as long as you have done. He must be a perfect gold mine to you ; therefore I say, take your precautions that you may not lose him ; sacrifice much rather than run the risk of his leaving you, and remember there is nothing so suspicious, or so ready and willing to believe himself deceived as the man who keeps an expensive mistress.”

“He has nothing to fear,” replied Lolo, closing the book she had been pretending to read with a movement of impatience.

“What is the use of talking nonsense ? No man’s mistress remains faithful to him for any length of time unless she is a fool, and I will not insult you, my dear Olga, by supposing for a moment that you are one. Why are you, then, so cruel to me ? Why are my sincere love addresses rejected with disdain while no doubt those of other men are listened to with pleasure ? Am I worse than other men ?”

“Yes, you are ; I hate you, Count, and I have had enough of your conversation.” She rose from the couch, intending to ring for a servant to show her objectionable visitor out of the room.

“What are you going to do ?” said Count Immers-

dorf, guessing her intention, and seizing her hand he pulled her down again on the couch.

"I am going to ring the bell to have you turned out, and I forbid you ever to set foot again in my house."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the Count with a wicked laugh. In a moment he had thrown her back upon the couch and passed his arm round her waist; feeling his kiss upon her lips Lolo gave a scream, and at that minute a loud ring was heard at the house door. It was Count Klinkenstein coming home, but who had forgotten his latch key.

Count Immersdorf let Lolo go, and hurriedly seizing his hat and cane left the room; he passed Count Klinkenstein on the staircase, and having said, "How do you do?" to him, beat a precipitate retreat. As Count Klinkenstein entered Lolo's sitting-room, she threw herself into his arms and burst out crying.

"What is the matter with you, Lolo?" he inquired, caressing her.

"Count Immersdorf has been insulting me," she replied, and then she told him all that had taken place.

When Count Klinkenstein understood what she was saying to him he flew into a violent rage, stamping about the room, using dreadful language and breathing vengeance against Count Immersdorf. His violence made Lolo cease crying, and when she saw that he had calmed down a little, thinking it best to tell him everything at once, she showed him the threatening letter she had just received, saying as she handed it to him: "Edward, troubles never seem to come singly; read this."

"A love letter from that beast?" asked the Count, taking the paper and sitting down to read it.

"Worse than that, Edward."

He read it through twice before he answered; then, instead of going off into another violent rage as Lolo had expected, he replied very quietly: "It is a very impudent letter, but it can do you no harm, Lolo. Do you suppose that I would believe anything they said against you?" Then he took her in his arms and made her sit upon his knees, and kissed her and soothed her.

"Do you know who could have written it, Lolo?"

"I have no idea unless it be that odious Count Immersdorf, who has done it out of spite to me because I have always received his advances so coldly."

"He is odious, Lolo, and I will pay him out for so grossly insulting you; but I can hardly believe that he would venture to blackmail you. It is a crime which is severely punished."

"Then I do not know who could have written it, Edward. Let us throw the letter into the fire, and think no more about it."

"No, Lolo!" he exclaimed, stopping her; "we must keep the letter; it is the only clue we have, and we must make some attempt to discover who wrote it."

"What will you do with it, Edward?"

"Hand it over to the police; they are very clever at tracing handwritings and letters."

"But supposing some poor people in real distress have been driven to ask for money in this way, it would be cruel to have them thrown into prison in addition to their other troubles." She was thinking

of her poor cousin who was then just beginning to undergo his sentence of imprisonment for what she considered an act of folly rather than a crime. A few tears rolled down her cheeks. Count Klinkenstein noticed them, and said,—

“Do not cry, Lolo ; the men who wrote this letter are thorough blackguards, and not poor people in real distress. You may be sure of that ; poor people do not ask for large sums of money as is done in this letter ; no, this is a regular attempt at blackmailing, and with the help of the police we must sift this matter to the bottom.”

“Do whatever you think best, Edward,” and she leant her head against his shoulder, for she felt enervated and tired out with all the worries and the excitement she had gone through that day.

“Lolo, I will go now and try and see one of the superior police officials, and take his advice as to what is best to be done.” Then Count Klinkenstein folded the letter and put it into his pocket and went out.

As he walked along his thoughts returned to Count Immersdorf’s assault on Lolo. His blood boiled at the very thought of it, and had he met the Count at that moment he would probably have run his sword through him. Then he began walking faster and faster as if he found relief in the physical energy he was displaying, and all the while he was turning over in his mind what steps he should take to accomplish his revenge. Was he to allow his mistress to be insulted and to fold his arms and do nothing, or was he to call out the Count and kill him in a duel ? As his anger began to cool down he saw many difficulties

in his way. People would think him a fool and laugh at him if he imperiled his life in defending the reputation of his mistress. They would say that a man who keeps a mistress must take things philosophically ; that such women were always faithless, and no one would believe that Lolo was an exception to the rule, and such being the case, what did it matter whether Count Immersdorf was one of her lovers or not ? Then he remembered that his colonel had lectured him only a few days before, and had given him to understand that it would be just as well if an officer of the Gardes du Corps did not keep a mistress whose relations were anarchists, and that it was common talk that Count Klinkenstein had supplied the money which was required to defend Heinrich Lazarus and his accomplices ; the colonel had added that in an *élite* regiment like the Gardes du Corps an officer's name must not be connected with any scandal, and he told Count Klinkenstein that he would have to mend his ways, or he would have to leave the regiment.

All things considered, Count Klinkenstein came to the conclusion that it was best to avoid any further scandal for the moment, and that, therefore, Count Immersdorf must be left alone ; but he resolved to make inquiries into his antecedents, for it was well known that there were several shady things in his past career, and if he succeeded in discovering anything particularly discreditable to him he would let it out, and so punish him for his attempted seduction of Lolo.

On reaching the police station to which he had directed his steps, Count Klinkenstein asked to see

the chief official on duty, and on being ushered into his presence told him what had brought him there and produced the threatening letter. The inspector assured the Count that the matter would be reported to headquarters, and that everything which could be done would be done to trace out the offender. Satisfied with this answer, Count Klinkenstein went and dined at the Jockey Club.

CHAPTER XXX.

SEVERAL days had passed since Count Immersdorf had sent Olga Zanelli the letter which he hoped would secure him the sum of £500, and yet he had received no sign from Moses Jacobsohn that the threats had had their proper effect and that the money had been paid. Had there been a hitch in the proceedings, or had the Jew gone off to America with the whole sum? Count Immersdorf was in a very irritable mood; he had kept much indoors during the last few days, as he was certain that Lolo had told Count Klinkenstein all that had taken place between them, and he did not quite know what sort of a reception he would meet with if he came across the hot-headed young officer in the street or at the club. Besides, that very morning a money-lender had come to him with a bill of his for £200 which was due, and had demanded immediate payment, refusing to be put off any longer with promises. A scene had taken place between them, and the money-lender had been eventually turned out; but, as the operation was being carried out by the Count's servant, the injured man had flourished the bill in the Count's face, and screamed out that he would inform the committee of the Jockey Club of Count Immersdorf's financial difficulties and get him into trouble. It was very

irritating to be annoyed in this sort of way for a miserable £200. However, money had to be found and the money-lender silenced, so Count Immersdorf resolved that he would play at cards that night at the Jockey Club, and either break himself or win large sums. A master-stroke was necessary; he must extricate himself from his present position, for life was really not worth living if one was to be continually threatened with immediate and complete bankruptcy. Count Immersdorf had therefore made up his mind that if that night he found fortune adverse to him at *écarté* he would simply make use of certain little expedients he knew to correct her want of consideration towards himself. The rest of that day he spent exercising himself with a pack of cards.

Although it was summer and Berlin was more or less empty, as far as court society was concerned, there were still a good many people that evening at the Jockey Club, for there had been some racing in the afternoon at Hoppegarten. It was a warm evening, and in the card-room all the windows had been thrown open. A few officers were playing various games of cards for small sums, but no serious gambling was going on, the occupants of the club seeming to be too overcome with the heat to be able to attend to the exciting pastime of winning or losing money. Enconcecd in a comfortable arm-chair in a corner of the room slumbered that arch gambler the fat banker Grunebaum, with the perspiration running down his face.

"Berlin is getting very dull," remarked the ducal head of the house of Hohenschwanz to his neighbour

Count Dirnheim, one of the most extravagant sportsmen of Germany. "I shall go away in a few days for a change; these asphalt-paved streets of our capital are like furnaces in summer."

"I shall run over to London," replied the Count, who was well known as an anglo-maniac; "summer is the right time of year to be in England; you have then the London season, Ascot, and Goodwood, and many other ways of amusing yourself."

"That is all very well for you," answered the Duke, "but for a man who does not speak English it is the dulllest place in the world. Why the deuce don't the inhabitants learn to speak another language; they would then attract so many more tourists to their island, and what lots of money they might make in fleecing them."

"No doubt not to be able to speak the language of the country one is travelling in is very inconvenient; but, then, in England they understand comfort so well; their houses and their clubs are so superior to ours that I am always glad when I am there."

"You are quite mad about everything English," retorted the Duke; "and as for comfort, I think we understand it very well here." Then his grace stretched out his legs and laid his head against the back of the well-stuffed arm-chair he was occupying, and having folded his hands over his stomach he began twirling his thumbs in a dreamy state of ecstasy into which one is liable to fall when one has partaken richly of an excellent dinner. The Duke and the Count closed their eyes and remained silent for a little time.

"Is there no news to-night, Count?" asked the Duke, suddenly waking up from a short nap.

"Everything seems quiet now that they have polished off those confounded socialists. I hope we shall hear no more of them for a very long time to come."

"It was a good job the police caught so many of them at one stroke," said the millionaire Duke. "What the deuce do these young men want to upset our present Government for? I am sure they are not competent to replace it by anything better of their own creation, and if they were to succeed in their wicked and senseless design it would be most inconvenient to us."

"It is certainly very scandalous that the son of a court chaplain should be a leading spirit among these anarchists," replied the Count; "one ought to have made an example of him as a warning to others, and to have inflicted upon him the heaviest sentence allowed by the law instead of letting him off with a paltry six months' imprisonment. I never heard of such a thing. Our judges are no longer reliable."

"It is most disgraceful, my dear Count, most disgraceful," exclaimed the Duke, who, being a Roman Catholic, was on the whole rather pleased that the son of an ultra-Conservative Protestant parson should have gone to the bad and become a revolutionist. "The father must have neglected his son's education most shamefully or the phenomenon would be inexplicable. I do not know what we are coming to when court chaplains breed socialists and firebrands. We shall next be having Jacobin dukes!"

"We have got too much education in Germany, my

dear Duke ; that is the cause of all our troubles. If men knew less they would not talk such a lot of fustian nonsense."

"Eh ! Count, would it not be quite sufficient if men only knew how to bet on races and to play at cards ?" said the Duke, poking fun at his neighbour.

"They would be much better employed in spending their time in that way than in wasting their evenings in beerhouses listening to treasonable and inflammatory speeches. I cannot understand why the judge let these men off so easily, and especially that confounded son of a parson."

"You will allow that he was brilliantly defended ?"

"What business had he to be defended at all ? A brilliant defence in political cases does a deal of harm, and should be forbidden."

"You would refuse to allow them to be defended, Count ?"

"The most I would allow miserable paupers as these men were would be an advocate selected and paid by Government, who would know how to carry on the defence in a proper spirit. Sensational speeches like the one made in court in defence of that individual Heinrich Lazarus do as much harm, and ought to be punished as severely as the inflammatory speeches of demagogues outside."

"Is it true, as some people say, that Count Klinkenstein found the money for the defence ?"

"Indirectly I expect he did, for he is entirely in the hands of his mistress, who is a cousin of that creature Heinrich Lazarus. She was in court every day of the trial."

"A fascinating pretty creature that Olga Zanelli,"

remarked the voluptuous Duke ; " I must say I admire her courage in not abandoning her cousin. It is an excellent point in a woman's character if she does not abandon a man when he is in adversity."

" That Klinkenstein is a fool," answered the Count ; " a man ought to have enough sense to keep his mistress in order, and not to allow her to make an exhibition of herself ; it is the love of notoriety and scandal which makes women frequent law courts ; they ought to be all turned out of such places ; if they are pretty, they are liable to exert a pernicious influence on the lawyers and witnesses, which is not creditable to the proper administration of the law."

" They say she rules Klinkenstein entirely, which is not to be wondered at as he is not a man of much character."

" He has already half ruined himself for her."

" There is no pleasanter way of getting through one's money than in spending it on pretty women," replied the Duke, thinking of his younger days and of his numerous and expensive liaisons.

" Let Count Klinkenstein spend what he likes upon this woman, and no one will severely blame him for it," said the Count ; " but it seems to me scandalous that a Prussian officer should allow his money to be spent in defending demagogues and in the propagation of damnable and subversive doctrines."

Count Immersdorf, who had just entered the room, interrupted the conversation.

" There does not seem to be much play going on to-night," he remarked ; then turning to the Duke he added : " Do you feel inclined for a game at *écarté* ?"

"I feel more inclined to sleep, my dear Count," replied the president of the club; "it is so confounded hot to-night."

"I must play with some one," muttered Count Immersdorf, then suddenly noticing in a corner of the room the obese form of the banker Grunebaum, who was asleep, he went up to him, and touching him on the shoulder to wake him, said: "My dear Banker, will you play a game at *écarté* with me? It will do you more good than to sleep so heavily after your dinner."

The Banker rubbed his eyes and looked up. The word *écarté* was enough to drive away all idea of sleep from him, for was it ever known that so inveterate a gambler had refused to play his favourite game?

"I will play anything you like, my dear Count, anything you like;" then he leant on the arms of his chair, and having raised himself with an effort, he proceeded with Count Immersdorf to take a seat at a card-table.

A little group of spectators soon gathered round the table to watch the play, and amongst them was Count Klinkenstein, who was longing to see the Banker win Count Immersdorf's money. However, that night the Banker seemed to have a run of bad luck, and his adversary was steadily winning. Count Klinkenstein was standing behind Count Immersdorf watching him closely, for he had noticed that when the stakes were high he generally won with a facility which seemed rather extraordinary.

"I am certain he is cheating," said Count Klinken-

stein to himself, as he noticed the peculiar way in which the Count took up the pack of cards after they were cut to him. It was a difficult thing to prove, so he remained quiet, keeping his eye all the time on Count Immersdorf's hands.

There was a large bet on the game, and both players had four points, so that only one point was necessary for either of them to win. Count Immersdorf dealt.

"He has cheated!" shouted Count Klinkenstein, seizing Count Immersdorf's hands; "look at his cards; he has got the king; I saw him pass the card from below the pack and deal it to himself." Before any one could intervene, Count Klinkenstein had turned over the cards, and there right enough was the king. "I knew it; I have watched him for some time; he has been cheating all along."

"What do you mean by insulting me in this way?" exclaimed Count Immersdorf, rising from his seat lividly pale. "How dare you make such insinuations! If you were not in the club I would box your ears!"

"That would not alter matters," retorted Count Klinkenstein, excitedly; "I saw you cheat at cards; I saw the way you turned up that king; you are a common cheat, you know it as well as I do, and you cannot deny it."

"I do deny it," replied Count Immersdorf; "and I appeal to the president of the club to protect me from your odious insinuations and insults."

"It is only a coward who calls for protection!" exclaimed Count Klinkenstein, looking truculent. "If you have a particle of honour in you, defend it yourself, and do not appeal to others to do so."

Every one in the room had gathered round the two Counts, and opinions were freely given as to what should be done. The Duke, who had been dosing in his chair, jumped up on hearing the fracas, and had hurried to prevent the two fiery combatants from coming to blows within the precincts of the Jockey Club.

"Gentlemen," he cried, "I beg you to remember where you are. If you have a dispute surely you can settle it without using violent language and bawling at the top of your voices. Be sensible, gentlemen, be sensible. What is all this disturbance about?" As he was president the Duke naturally felt very much annoyed that such a scene as the one above described should have taken place within the clubhouse, for he hated any scandal connected with the establishment under his care.

Every one was waiting to hear what Count Immersdorf would reply to Count Klinkenstein's challenge.

"You will hear further from me," said Count Immersdorf to his accuser; then turning to the Duke, he added: "I have been accused of dishonourable conduct at cards by Count Klinkenstein; he is a headstrong, foolish youth as you all know, and I repudiate the accusation; but you will understand that after this we cannot both remain members of this club, and until the matter is settled I will leave the premises."

Having collected the banknotes which he had won, and which amounted to some £600, he bade good-night to the Banker, who had remained seated during the row, and who felt very much annoyed that his

game should have been interrupted so suddenly, and then left the club.

As soon as he was gone a perfect hubbub of voices arose ; everybody was discussing the case and giving his views about it.

"Even supposing he did cheat at cards," said some one to Count Klinkenstein, "how can you prove it satisfactorily?"

"I know that he has cheated," replied Count Klinkenstein ; "I am convinced of it, otherwise I would not have accused him of it in public. I am delighted that I have got a chance of killing him now."

"You are too hasty, my dear Count," said the Duke ; "you should always avoid rows. If you believe that Count Immersdorf cheats at cards, no one asks you to continue playing with him. How are you to prove your accusation, I should like to know? If you had suspicions you ought to have come to me, and I would have inquired into them, and if I was satisfied that there was some foundation for entertaining them, I would have warned members to be very careful when they played with him. You have been foolishly hasty in what you have done ; one never accuses a member of a club like this of dishonourable conduct unless one is quite certain that one is able to prove what one says. You have caused a very disagreeable scandal, for which the club will not be thankful to you. Confounded disagreeable scandal this," muttered the Duke. "It is most annoying, most annoying indeed," and he left the room to think over what was best to be done to save the honour of the Jockey Club.

“ I do not care whether I acted judiciously or not,” said Count Klinkenstein, addressing the people who were standing round him ; “ Count Immersdorf is a blackguard, and now I have a chance of killing him ; that is all I wanted : I am perfectly satisfied.” Then he went and wrote a couple of letters to brother officers of his asking them to be his seconds, and having sent them off by messenger he went home in a delightful state of excitement at the prospect of being able to kill the man who had attempted to seduce his mistress.

Count Immersdorf likewise went home, but feeling very depressed, and he had good reason for being so. In the first place, Count Klinkenstein’s interruption had stopped him at the very moment he was about to win large sums of money from the Banker, which would have put him on his legs again ; then the accusation of having cheated at cards, although almost impossible to prove, would still cling to him, and no doubt many persons would believe it ; to labour under such a suspicion was almost worse than to be publicly exposed ; people would avoid playing with him as a precaution, and he would find his occupation at the club gone ; as for the duel, it troubled him very little, for with all his faults Count Immersdorf was not a coward, and he had fought many a duel when he was an officer, and he had the reputation of being a good swordsman.

“ One thing is quite clear,” muttered Count Immersdorf to himself as he mounted his staircase, “ I must get this duel over as soon as possible ; any delay would be fatal to me, for it would make people say

that I was afraid to meet Count Klinkenstein, and that I had eventually been driven into fighting a duel by the public comments on my character. I must brazen it out whatever I do ; I will kill this silly boy ; it will have a good effect, and make people think twice before they utter anything against my character. If I find that members of the club decline to play cards with me, I will ask them individually whether they suspect me of cheating ; how many will dare reply that they do ? Most men will prefer to lose their money at cards than their lives in a duel. I must write at once to secure seconds."

He entered his apartment ; a rather dirty-looking envelope lay on the table addressed to him in pencil. He took it up and tore it open ; inside there was a half-sheet of paper, on which were scribbled a few words to the following effect :—

"Make haste to leave the country ; do not lose a moment. It is all up with us ; the police are on our track."

Count Immersdorf turned deadly pale and sank into a chair ; he understood the meaning of those words well enough although they were unsigned. Moses Jacobsohn must have written them and left them in his rooms ; evidently Olga Zanelli had shown the threatening letter to Count Klinkenstein, who had put it into the hands of the police. It was humiliating to think that this boy, this Count Klinkenstein, should not only have exposed him as having cheated at cards, but should also have brought about his absolute ruin.

"What can I do ?" groaned Count Immersdorf,

as he lay in his chair ; "it is all up with me now. I must leave this place, and hide myself in some uncivilised backwood of America." The thought of having to leave Berlin where he had spent most of his life, and where he had passed such pleasant days, affected him so much that probably for the first time in his life he burst out crying and gave vent to his despair.

When he had sufficiently recovered to be able to think over the steps he should take for his protection the night was already far advanced. He summoned his servant who was fast asleep, and instructed him to pack all his things at once.

"I am called away on business," he informed him ; "I must leave Berlin by the first train to-morrow morning for London. I shall be away for a few days."

Very early the next morning Count Immersdorf drove to the station. He ordered the cabman to pass by the Jockey Club, and as he cast a last farewell look at his favourite haunt he had to wipe away the tears which began to gather in his eyes.

Count Immersdorf took his seat in the morning express, and when it steamed out of the station he remained standing at the open window of the carriage till the last of Berlin had vanished in the distance.

"I shall never see this place again," he said, as he took his seat ; "it is all over now with me, there is no help for it ; I shall never again stroll up the Unter den Linden, or visit the racecourse of Hoppegarten, or spend pleasant evenings at the Jockey Club." Great beads of perspiration came out on his

forehead as he thought of it. "I must begin life again in a foreign land, far from civilised life, surrounded by ruffians ; I who have been accustomed to polished society ; alas ! alas ! it is dreadful ;" and he covered his face with his hands to hide his agony.

A few days later all Berlin knew that Count Immersdorf had run away, and that the police were in search for him. This strange event was the one subject of conversation at the Jockey Club.

"You have done very well, my dear boy," said the Duke of Bummelberg, patting Count Klinkenstein on the back ; "you have done very well indeed in ridding us of such a blackguard ; I always thought he was one, but what was I to do ? It is no easy matter to tell a gentleman, and a late officer of the Guards, that he is a blackguard. I regret that in society one is so often compelled to keep one's opinions to oneself. But you have acted very bravely, my dear boy, very bravely ; the club owes you a debt of gratitude. God bless you," and another friendly pat from the ducal hand was laid on the young Count's back.

All the members of the club sang chorus to the Duke's opinion, and they all professed that there could be no doubt that Count Immersdorf had cheated at cards, that he was a brazen-faced scoundrel, and that the club was very lucky to have got rid of him ; and they were all loud in their praises of Count Klinkenstein, and it was not to be wondered at that the young Count thought himself in consequence a very big man.

CHAPTER XXXI.

MIDSUMMER had come again, and every one who was able had left the stuffy capital for the country. Count Klinkenstein had accompanied his uncle to the station, and taken leave of his cousin Nelly promising to visit them in their Pomeranian retreat, for since the ball at the French Embassy in the preceding March he had struck up a great friendship with his pretty cousin, and they had seen a great deal of each other of late.

As usual Olga Zanelli was spending the summer at Potsdam in a villa hired for her by Count Klinkenstein, who was as assiduous as ever in his attentions to his mistress. Her child, who was now a little more than a year old, and who had been christened Gisèle after the Count's sister, was an endless source of pleasure to them both, and they would spend hours together playing with her as they lay on the lawn in front of the house. That summer they spent much more quietly than usual; there were fewer parties and picnics, for the Count's health had suffered much; his nervous system was quite out of order, and he was not unfrequently assailed by fits of depression, a not unnatural result of the frequent use he made of exciting drugs, and his medical advisers had ordered him rest and quiet. He no longer had the same energy

as formerly, and frequently when he found himself alone he would be troubled with the thought that after all his friends might be right and that it would be better for him to marry and to settle down, for he had naturally domestic instincts ; but then to do so it would be necessary to get rid of Lolo, and when he realised all that meant he would go off into a wild fit of fury against himself for having allowed the idea of such a possibility to enter his mind ; he would then hurry to Lolo and fawn upon her and kiss her and make love to her with more ardour than ever from a sort of feeling that he would thereby strengthen the chain which bound them together, and make it more difficult for him to break with her. Count Klinckenstein knew well enough how weak he was, and how easily he might succumb to temptation and the reiterated advice of his family and friends, and he was far from blind to the attractions of his cousin Nelly, and the thought of it made him very restless and disturbed at times.

One morning Count Klinckenstein received a telegram from his agent at Dresden, saying that he was coming to Berlin the next day, and that he must absolutely see him on important business.

“What a nuisance these agents are,” said Count Klinckenstein to Lolo, as he took leave of her the next morning to keep the appointment in town with his man of business. “Why can they not manage an estate without continually worrying one with questions? I never trouble them with any myself ; why the deuce then can they also not leave me alone?”

When Count Klinckenstein reached his apartment

in Berlin he found his agent, Max Vogel, already installed in an arm-chair and waiting patiently for his arrival.

"My dear fellow, you seem to be in a confounded hurry to see me," exclaimed the Count, good humouredly, as he shook hands with the old man of business of his family; "I am sure it is no good news which has brought you to Berlin, so please be quick and let me know the worst at once. Has my castle been burnt down?"

"No," replied Max Vogel, "your ancestral castle of Klinkenstein is, I am glad so say, built of solid stone, and not likely to be much damaged by any fire."

"It is a pity," replied the Count, "for it is insured and with the insurance money I would be able to build a pleasant and bright modern house to replace the old gloomy castle."

"I regret to see that you have not got much regard for your ancestral home," said the old man of business with a sigh, for he had been connected with the family for very many years.

"Can you expect a nineteenth-century gentleman to find pleasure in living in a most uncomfortable fortified castle as if he were a mediæval baron or brigand? We have made much progress since those days; then why should we rejoice to be saddled with a ridiculous house in parts six hundred years old? Our houses should be in keeping with our modern ideas; they ought to adapt themselves to us instead of we to them. I suppose you would also like me to put myself into armour because I happen to have a

mediaeval castle, which ought to have been removed long ago, if my ancestors had had any sense about them, and replaced by a more sensible sort of building."

"You ought to be proud to have inherited a castle so famous in the history of Saxony."

"I am much prouder of having a pretty mistress I love and who loves me, than I would be if I possessed all the old decayed historical castles in the world. It only makes me melancholy to look at them."

"They are expensive things, your pretty mistresses," said old Max Vogel, shaking his head and pulling out a bundle of papers from his inner coat pocket. "They have brought many an old family to ruin and ancestral estates into the market."

"My dear Vogel," replied the Count, laughing, "I hope you are not going to lecture me ; I assure you I hear quite enough good advice from my uncle Count Eckstein. You see, I am still very young ; you must make allowances for that. I shall probably be very steady when I am old."

"If I may express an opinion," said the old man of business, "I would advise you to become a little steady now, and not to wait till you are old, for your affairs are in a very bad way."

"But, my dear fellow," exclaimed the Count, "surely it is your business to mend them and not mine. Please do not bother me with accounts."

"You are treating the matter very lightly, and I am afraid that you do not realise how serious the matter is."

"Well, what has happened ?"

“ I do not see how I am to meet your liabilities out of the rental of the estate.”

“ You can borrow money, and pay it off when the rents come in.”

“ You have unfortunately been borrowing in a very reckless manner, and I do not see where I am to turn to get the money you wrote to me to supply you with.”

“ Well, do the best you can.”

Max Vogel heaved a sigh at the Count's levity, and said with a broken voice, for he had known him ever since he was a boy : “ My dear Count, I have done my best for you ; I have economised as much as I could on the outlay on the estate, so that you might be supplied with all the money you were continually asking me for. I was hoping that your fit of extravagance would not last very long, and that you would grow more careful in a few years, but unfortunately I was not even aware of all you were spending. It is absolutely necessary that you should now face the situation, or you will very soon be ruined.”

“ How can that be ? My estates are pretty extensive, are they not ? Anyhow, if the state of my affairs is as serious as you make out, I think you might have let me know something about it before.”

“ I wrote enough letters,” replied the Count's agent ; “ but I regret to say that I rarely got a reply to any of them.”

Count Klinkenstein pulled open a drawer of his writing-table, and there, right enough, was a pile of letters, mostly unopened. “ How can you expect me to read such a lot of stuff,” said the Count, pulling out

the letters by handfuls and letting them drop on the floor. "Why must you cover so many sheets when you have something to tell me? can you not learn to condense what you have to say?"

The business-like Max Vogel groaned to see his epistles treated in this flippant manner, but the old man had a love for the family of Klinkenstein, for he had served it long, and he had been born on the property, so he thought it his duty to try and save the young and thoughtless Count from indulging in any further extravagances.

"If you will allow me," he began, "I would like to talk to you seriously about your financial situation."

"Certainly, my dear Vogel; but must it be to-day?"

"Yes, for the sooner you realise that you are no longer a rich man the better it will be for yourself."

"My dear Vogel, I never believed myself to be a Rothschild; but still I have enough means to satisfy my wants, which are not very great."

"If your wants continue to be as costly as they have been ever since you entered the army, you will be a beggar in a very short time."

"Come, come, my dear Vogel, you must confess you are talking nonsense now."

"I am telling you the literal truth."

"What has become of all my money then?"

"That is exactly what I should like to know. There is now only one way to save yourself from absolute ruin, and that is to cut down your expenses at once."

The serious way in which the old man said this alarmed Count Klinkenstein, for the prospect of find-

ing himself suddenly left without any money did not please him at all.

"My dear Vogel, do explain to me what has happened, for I am sure I do not understand the situation you say I am in."

"I will," replied the agent, getting out his bulky note-book and turning over its leaves as if he wished to refresh his memory.

"Please do it in as few words as possible," said the Count, taking a seat and putting on a look of resignation.

"I will begin with the total income of the Klinkenstein estates," began Max Vogel. "Of late years the total revenue has averaged about 170,000 marks ; of this sum 25,000 marks are yearly paid to your sister, as settled by deed when you came of age ; the taxes on the property, the outgoings for repairs, for keeping up the castle and gardens, and the salaries of the keepers and foresters, absorb nearly 60,000 marks a year, therefore there remains for your own use about 80,000 marks yearly."

"A very nice income for a man of moderate tastes," interrupted Count Klinkenstein, with a smile ; "I am quite satisfied with that amount."

"There are few officers of the Guards who have as large a fortune as that," continued Max Vogel ; "and it is a pity that you did not see your way to keep your expenditure within your means."

"I have made a few debts, I grant," answered the Count, "but I mean to pay them off gradually ; there is nothing to be alarmed at."

Max Vogel drew a paper from his pocket which he

unfolded: "It is this which has brought me here," he said.

"What is it?"

"A letter from a lawyer asking me whether you are able to meet bills to the amount of over 300,000 marks, signed by you, and which will fall due very shortly, or whether the revenue of your estates is sufficient to allow him to recommend his clients to renew them for a time at a reasonable rate of interest."

"And what did you answer?"

"Nothing as yet; I have come to see you as to the reply I should return."

"That is very simple; tell your friend the lawyer that you recommend his clients to renew the bills."

"The interest he asked is exorbitant."

"How much did you say I owed?"

"The sum of 300,000 marks."

"I never received anything like that sum from those Jewish swindling money-lenders."

"It is much to be regretted that you ever went to them. If you had applied to me I would have raised the money for you on more reasonable terms."

"My dear Vogel, I did not wish to give you any trouble."

"There is no trouble I would have grudged to have saved you from your present situation."

"Well, my dear fellow, now that I am in the mess I must make the best of it. What do you suggest that I should do?"

"Do you owe any money besides this amount?"

Count Klinkenstein knew perfectly well that in the last few months he had borrowed several large sums

from certain other money-lenders, but he did not wish to make his old and faithful agent more miserable than he was already by making premature disclosures, nor did he see the wisdom of troubling himself about the payment of bills which would not fall due for some time to come, when for the moment he had to find the means of meeting liabilities which amounted to the large sum of 300,000 marks, so he replied to Max Vogel after a little hesitation which gave his answer an air of truth: "I think that is all I owe."

"It is a great relief to me to hear that," said Max Vogel: "I was very much afraid you might have contracted other debts of which I knew nothing."

"You may be quite re-assured, my dear Vogel; now please tell me what you advise me to do."

"You must give up the expensive life you have been leading of late years," replied Max Vogel, rather sternly; "you must in future live as economically as possible, and I will then try in the next few years to pay off your liabilities by yearly instalments out of the revenue of your estates. If you will allow me to express my full views, I would recommend you to retire from Berlin and the army, and to live quietly on your estates."

"My dear fellow, you do not know what you are talking about. How can I leave the army? It is quite out of the question. What amusements would I have if I lived at Klinkenstein?"

"The preserves are large enough."

"But I do not care about shooting, and peasant girls are not quite good enough to make love to after one has been accustomed to Berlin ladies."

"I do not insist on your living at Klinkenstein if it is so disagreeable to you to do so ; go and live abroad quietly and economically."

"There are reasons, my dear Vogel, which I cannot explain to you, but which prevent me from leaving Berlin. How much do you want a year to pay off these debts ?"

"I would suggest that you should give up the half of your present income of 80,000 marks a year ; in nine or ten years your debts would then be paid off, and you would still have during that period 40,000 marks a year for your personal expenses."

"It is a great deal too little ; you are really not reasonable, Vogel ; it is impossible for me to live on 40,000 marks a year. Sell some of the property and pay off the debts ; that is the only thing to be done."

"You forget that nearly all your estates form a *majorat*, and that therefore they could not be sold without the sanction of your family. I do not believe your uncle Count Eckstein would ever give his consent to such a course."

"For Heaven's sake, do not let him know a word about my debts ; he is certain to make himself exceedingly disagreeable if he heard about them, and perhaps he would apply to have me put under tutelage again ; that would be too dreadful."

"It will have to come to that, if you continue to live as extravagantly as you have done of late."

"Now do not threaten me, my dear Vogel, but try and get me out of this difficulty in some more sensible way than you have proposed. Could one

not cut down trees and sell them? I have lots of forests, and they always seemed to me a worthless encumbrance."

"The price of timber has fallen very low of late; the market is glutted with wood from Russia and Sweden."

"It is a great nuisance."

"I see only one way of saving you from being completely ruined, and that is, that you should accept the proposal I made before that you should try and live for a time on half your present income, and let me gradually pay off your debts with the other half."

"My dear Vogel, with the best will in the world I cannot do that."

"It is not a hardship to have to live on 40,000 marks a year. As a sincere friend of your family I implore you to make the small sacrifice I am asking of you; it will save you from much misery in the future. It would be a pity that the head of the ancient family of Klinkenstein, and the owner of so famous a castle, should become almost a pauper."

The old man spoke with tears in his eyes, and his appeal had some effect upon Count Klinkenstein.

"My dear Vogel, do not think that I want the money only for myself; I require it chiefly for other persons; but as you say that I will become a pauper if I continue as I am doing now, I suppose I must pull myself together and make some economies. It is a serious thing, however, to have to give up suddenly half one's income, so I must ask you to let me have a little time to think over the scheme you have suggested to me."

"Delay is a bad thing," replied Max Vogel, shaking his head.

"That may be perfectly true," said the Count; "but it is quite impossible for me to make up my mind straight off. You must give me time."

"Can you let me know your decision in a few days?"

"In a few days! Give me at least a month or two."

"That is impossible."

"Then, my dear Vogel, the best thing you can do is to renew the bills for another six months, on the best terms you can get; by that time I will have made up my mind one way or another."

"Is that your last word?" inquired Max Vogel, much depressed by the determination of the Count to put off as long as possible the coming to a decision on the question of economising.

"Yes, my dear Vogel, it is. I wish you would not look so miserable; come and dine with me to-night."

"I cannot; I must return to Dresden at once, to try and borrow money for you at a cheaper rate of interest than you are paying at present."

"I am very much touched by your zeal on my behalf," said Count Klinkenstein, giving his hand to his agent; "but it would please me more if you would only look a little less solemn. Things will come right in the end. I have maternal relations in Russia who are very rich, and who may leave me something. One is only young once in one's life; you may well excuse my being a little extravagant now; I am sure to steady down in a few years, and then perhaps I will become a miser to rejoice your heart."

Max Vogel saw that it was no use continuing the discussion, so he took his leave, and left Berlin by the next train for Dresden.

When Count Klinkenstein found himself alone, he began to think seriously over his position. It was the first time that his pecuniary difficulties had been brought vividly before his mind, and that he realised how easy it was to get rid of money, and how difficult to find any when one most wanted it. The thought that he would no longer be able to satisfy every one of Lolo's whims made him very angry with himself, for had he not taught her to spend money recklessly ; and had he not pushed her on to indulge in every sort of extravagance ! It was cruel to have to tell her now that the money was all gone, and that she must change her mode of living ; anyhow, he consoled himself with the idea that the consideration of his financial affairs had been put off for another six months ; during that period he would try and diminish expenses gradually, so that when the time came for telling Lolo the whole truth she would feel the blow less keenly. "She is a sensible girl," said Count Klinkenstein to himself, "and I am sure she will make the best of a bad business ; and whether she is richly dressed or not she will always remain pretty, but still it is very disagreeable to have to tell her that I am no longer a rich man."

Then he left his rooms, and drove to the station to catch the next train to Potsdam, and to return to his mistress.

CHAPTER XXXII.

WHEN Count Klinkenstein appeared again at the villa, Lolo saw at once by his looks that he was not in good humour.

“What did your man of business tell you?” she inquired, giving him a kiss of welcome.

“He brought me all the accounts of the estate,” he replied, trying to turn off her inquiry; “there is nothing I hate more than going through figures.”

“You certainly do not look very bright,” she said, laughing; “even though one is rich one must occasionally have some work to do. Sit down by my side and talk to me, and I will try and put you into a better humour than you are in at present.”

“Do not think for a moment that I am a rich man, Lolo; I am anything but a rich man; I am in reality a very poor man.”

She went off into a loud peal of laughter at the idea. “How absurd to call yourself a poor man, because you have perhaps not got the millions of the Rothschilds.”

It was very irritating for him to be told by Lolo that he was rich at the very moment that his man of business had assured him that if he did not soon begin to economise he would find himself a pauper in a very short time.

"I am not at all in a laughing humour," he replied ; "I assure you that I am not rich ; you need not laugh, Lolo ; you must take my words in their literal sense."

"Why do you spend so much money, Edward, if you are really not well off?"

He did not want to break the evil news to her just then, so he remained silent and looked foolish.

"I suppose your agent told you that things were not going well. It is a way they have to increase their importance ; do not be disheartened at what he may have said ; things are certain to come right in the end."

"It is doubtful," muttered Count Klinkenstein, who was always very irritable whenever he allowed his mind to dwell long upon any subject which was disagreeable.

She looked at him with astonishment ; then she said to him in a low, sweet voice which sent a thrill through him : "Edward, let me know what your man of business told you ; do not hide it from me, because it may be of a disagreeable nature, for it is my duty to comfort you in that case ; you know things are never as bad as they seem at first sight."

"Darling Lolo, do not try and worm things out of me which it can give you no pleasure to hear. You will know everything in course of time."

"It is no use hiding bad news ; do tell it me now."

"I cannot, Lolo ; you would call me a brute for having deceived you so long."

"Never, Edward ; but I would blame you if you

kept anything hidden from me which affected you seriously."

"If you insist, Lolo, I will tell you all ; but it will not give you any pleasure to hear it. On the whole, it is perhaps better that you should know the worst at once. I am a ruined man."

"Ruined !" exclaimed Lolo ; "ruined ! How ?"

"I have been spending too much money these last few years. I have been very extravagant."

There followed a silence, during which Olga Zanelli tried to realise the situation and all it meant.

"I have been the cause of it," she said, when she spoke again ; "you have been spending too much money on me, is it not so, Edward ?"

He felt sorry for her, and did not wish to hurt her feelings ; he gave her a kiss, and replied : "I made you spend the money, you are not to blame, Lolo ; I pushed you on to all your extravagances ; I told you I was rich ; you could not assume I was not speaking the truth."

"Why did your man of business not let you know before that you were living beyond your means ?"

"He did, but I never read his letters."

"It was very wrong of you ; let me know, Edward, what is your exact position. What did your man of business advise you to do ?"

"He wants me to live on a miserable 40,000 marks a year, and all the remainder of my income he expects me to give up to pay off my debts gradually."

"Is that all ? One can live very comfortably on that income."

"Lolo, do you understand what it means ? It

means that you will have to give up your pretty little house, your suppers, your costly dresses, your jewels, your hundred-and-one fantastic and expensive desires which I always did my best to satisfy."

"Well, I will learn to do without them."

"You do not realise how dull your life will be when your friends no longer come to see you, for if you do not give suppers and have a fine house you will soon discover that your friends will abandon you, for men do not care to bore themselves in a garret."

"If they only cared about my suppers, I will not weep very much if I never see them again."

"You are talking nonsense, Lolo ; you will care a great deal, for no woman likes to be ignored."

"When a woman loves she does not trouble herself much about other people."

"Love in a garret does not last long."

"You are cynical, Edward ; and I am sure you do not believe what you say."

"You will have to give up your carriage, Lolo."

"Then I will walk on foot ; that is after all no very great hardship."

Count Klinkenstein felt quite angry with Lolo because she had taken the bad news he had just broken to her so calmly and philosophically. He had expected that on hearing it she would have burst out crying, and then at least he would have had the satisfaction of trying to console her. In his present irritable mood he felt a craving for excitement, and the calmness of his mistress had for the moment the reverse of a soothing effect upon him. What business had she to be calm when he felt so put out at the

prospect of having to live for several years to come like a semi-pauper ?

"Then you are pleased that I am ruined ?" he said to her, rather angrily.

She knew his moods well, and how of late, owing to a disordered nervous system, he would pass from a state of bad humour and depression to one of levity without any apparent cause for it, so with a woman's instinct she put her arms round his neck and, kissing him, said : "Of course I am not pleased that you should have lost you money, Edward ; but I do not wish you to be depressed because you can no longer spend as much as you did. We can live very comfortably on what remains of your fortune, and in one respect I am really pleased at the prospect of a change of life. I was getting tired of all these noisy parties night after night with people who were comparative strangers to me ; now we shall live more quietly and see more of each other, and I will not love you the less for it."

He melted before her embrace, and for the remainder of that day they were like young lovers ; they discussed together the way they should live in future, and the economies they would make, and after dinner she sang to him, and he sat by her side at the piano turning over the leaves, and she seemed to him more fascinating than ever, and he felt as it were a new passion for his mistress rising in him.

For the next few days Olga Zanelli was continually going to Berlin to search for a small but suitable apartment for herself. She got rid of the lease of

her house, and sold most of the furniture which would have been quite out of place in the modest rooms which she now intended to occupy. On these excursions to Berlin she was generally accompanied by Count Klinkenstein, who felt rather amused in calculating with her whether they could afford to pay the rent demanded for rooms which were ridiculously modest by the side of those she had occupied of late. Economising was a new sensation to the Count, and it tickled his fancy for a time, and when dining in restaurants with brother officers he would ostentatiously give up drinking champagne, calling it a drink not suitable for a pauper, and would order claret instead, which cost but a very few marks less, and then he would go back to his mistress and tell her how good he was, and how careful of his money, and that he intended to avoid running into debt again. Then they would laugh together for a long time over the infinite amusement which poverty afforded them.

An apartment was finally selected. It was on the third floor of a barrack-like structure in a dismal uninteresting street paved with uneven pebbles, over which the cabs rattled with an irritating noise, which seemed especially loud in the still hours of the night. It had one great recommendation, it was cheap, and it could not be denied that there were rooms enough, but they were badly arranged, they opened one into the other, and they were mostly dark. Count Klinkenstein disliked the look of the place, and he was quite prepared to pay three times the rent demanded, if only he could get a brighter apartment, for, as he

said to Lolo, "It was impossible for him to love in a depressing dark hole ;" but she would listen to no remonstrances, and scolded him severely for again encouraging her to be extravagant, and she assured him that these rooms would look very nice when they had been properly furnished, and she would have the walls re-papered in light and bright colours, so he had nothing left to do but to acquiesce, and the bargain was closed. For the next fortnight Count Klinkenstein and Lolo were fully occupied in visiting furniture shops, and in buying all they considered necessary for their comfort, and when the apartment was finally ready he had to confess that it was a great deal less objectionable than he had expected, and then Lolo removed from her villa at Potsdam and came up to town and took possession of her new abode.

The gilded youth of Berlin felt severely Count Klinkenstein's financial difficulties and the closing of Olga Zanelli's pretty house, as it put an end to the series of pleasant suppers which had become quite an institution, and closed a salon where one used to meet all the clever actresses and pretty *danseuses* of the capital. The young officers of the Guards all lamented with one accord the sad circumstances which had reduced one of their number to make so pretty and intelligent a woman as Olga Zanelli retire from the world of pleasure and go and live on the third floor of a house in an unaristocratic street, the humdrum and uninteresting life of a respectable semi-married woman.

For a few weeks things went on well enough

between Count Klinkenstein and Olga Zanelli. He tried to compensate her for the loss of her beautiful home by renewed attentions, and by making a great display of affection ; and she, to console him for the barrenness of her new surroundings, made herself as agreeable as possible. After dining quietly in some unfashionable restaurant, they would go home, and she would then read or sing to him to retain him by her side ; but gradually the monotony of this sort of life began to pall upon him. His thoughts would wander back with an irritating persistency to the merry evenings he had passed in Lolo's former home ; to the suppers, the improvised dances, the loud good-humoured laughter which would follow the telling of some witty but questionable story, to the intoxicating charm which seemed to him to prevail there, because every one who came was bent on amusing himself, and was therefore full of spirits and go. He felt miserable left alone with Lolo ; miserable because it was on compulsion. In the old days nothing had given him greater pleasure than after a more than arduous series of suppers and late hours to run away with his mistress to some country inn, and there to spend a few days quietly in entire possession of her society ; but then he knew that whenever he had had enough of it he could return to Berlin and begin again the usual round of amusements. Now all was changed ; every night he must sit alone with Lolo, and it made him irritable and despondent, because he saw no prospect of his financial affairs righting themselves sufficiently to allow of his again indulging in that extravagant way of living to which he

had become accustomed. Lolo's present apartment was comfortable but homely, and he pined after luxury ; he felt the necessity of being surrounded by silks and rich brocades and endless pretty things, and to hear men praising his mistress ; now there was no one to do it. He could not feel amorously inclined in a bare room, and to add to his discomfort he not infrequently felt pangs of conscience at having made her his mistress, and especially because he had taught her to live extravagantly, and because he had promised her luxuries which it was no longer possible for him to supply her with ; nor was he pleased that she should take to her new surroundings so calmly and cheerfully ; he felt ashamed of himself for having deceived her, and he would have preferred had she occasionally ventilated her grievances and blackguarded him instead of being more loving than ever towards him.

Many a time, after having brooded more than usual over these thoughts, he would sit moody and silent during dinner, and as soon as it was over he would take up his hat and tell Lolo that he had business to transact ; then she would kiss him, and make no opposition to his going beyond showing a gentle reproach in her looks ; but she would remain with her lamp lit watching half through the night, like Hero for Leander, for the return of her lover, till finally she would fall asleep tired out with hopeless waiting. In the morning Count Klinkenstein would return and make some lame excuse, having really spent the night at his club trying to forget his troubles over games at *écarté*.

One evening, feeling more out of sorts than usual, he sent word to Lolo to say that he could not come and dine with her; then he went straight to an old haunt of his, one of the most expensive restaurants in Berlin. The room was full of officers he knew, but seeing Sydney Gray seated at a table by himself he went up to him and asked permission to dine with him.

"Certainly, my dear fellow," replied the Englishman; "take a seat. I have not seen much of you of late, so we ought to have many things to talk about."

Count Klinkenstein seated himself, and summoned the proprietor of the establishment to discuss the menu with him; after much talk, this important question having been settled regardless of expense, and a bottle of the best champagne having been put in ice, the Count called for a glass of sherry-bitters to give himself an appetite for the coming feast. As he gulped it down he said to Sydney Gray,—

"I have been out of sorts of late; when one finds oneself in that condition the best thing to do is to have a good dinner. It sets one up again."

"What have you been doing of late, Klinkenstein?"

"Boring myself to death, my dear friend; I am getting sick of everything."

"I hear you have got rid of your mistress, and broken up her establishment."

"I have done nothing of the sort; I still keep with her; I have no intention of abandoning her as you would insinuate. It is true that I have broken up her establishment for the moment, because I find that my financial affairs are not in as flourishing a condition

as I would wish them to be. She occupies now a more modest apartment ; but as soon as I find myself again in possession of some money, I mean to surround her with the luxury to which she is entitled, and which she is unfortunately compelled through my fault to forego for a short time."

"I am not astonished that she should have ruined you ; she literally threw money out of the window, and you gave her all the encouragement you could to continue that pleasant pastime. I was long ago convinced that a crash must come sooner or later, and that was the reason why I so rarely went to her house, for I did not care to see what an ass you were making of yourself over a woman."

"Do not be too harsh on her, Gray, she never said anything nasty about you ; in fact, she liked you better than most of the others, and she frequently complained to me that you were always so distant and coldly civil to her."

"You would have preferred that I should have made love to her."

"You are very annoying to-night, Gray ; I wish you would be a little more consoling, seeing how depressed I am."

"Where is she living now ?"

"On the third floor of a house in an unfashionable street."

"That is the preliminary step to getting rid of her altogether."

"No ! No ! No !" shouted the Count, beating the table with his fist ; "I have told you a thousand times that I had no intention of abandoning her."

“And I will also reply for the thousandth time that I think you are wrong in not doing so. The longer you keep together, the more difficult you will find it to separate. I do not suppose that you ever intend to marry her; you would be a fool if you did, for it would ruin your career in the army, and a man cannot be expected to do that for his mistress.”

“She knows that I cannot marry her; but that is no reason why we should not continue to live together.”

“That is all nonsense. The institution of having a mistress was invented as a stop-gap till a man got married, and it was never intended to be of a permanent character. In course of time the keenness of your amorous desires will wear off, and then you will think of settling down and of getting a wife. In my opinion it is more cruel to Olga Zanelli to get rid of her in, let us say, some ten years’ time than to pension her off now. She is still young, and if she were free she would probably marry some one in her position of life, and live happily with him ever after. The longer you deprive her of her freedom by keeping her as your mistress the more difficult will it become for her to get married when you make up your mind to break with her. It is selfish on your part to do her this wrong. If you find that you cannot live without a female companion, you had better get married. I have advised you to do so over and over again.”

Count Klinkenstein defended himself warmly against the accusation that he was acting selfishly in keeping Olga Zanelli as his mistress; she differed from other

people's mistresses ; she had been faithful to him now for nearly three years, and he had had a child by her. It was all very fine for persons who had never had a liaison with a woman which lasted more than twenty-four hours to give advice ; but when one had lived several years with as pretty a girl as Lolo, it was no easy matter suddenly to dismiss her, and to begin afresh with another woman, whether she be a new mistress or a wife.

There ensued a long discussion which lasted to the end of dinner on the interesting topic of man's relation to the female sex, its ethics and its morality. When Count Klinkenstein parted company with his friend, instead of going home to Lolo he returned to his rooms. The long discussion with Sydney Gray had put him into a very bad humour. He blamed himself for having engaged in it ; discussions such as these always ended by weakening his resolution to remain faithful to the promise he had made to Lolo that he would always look upon her as his wife, that he would treat her as such, and that nothing in the world would part them but death. Sydney Gray's remark that in faithfully carrying out what he considered to be an honourable resolution, he might be acting selfishly, and not in Lolo's true interest, annoyed him intensely. Could it be true that she would be happier married to another man than if she remained his mistress ? Could it ever come to pass that he would some day feel himself compelled to marry and to put her away ? Then he asked himself whether he would ever get tired of her. It was a question impossible to answer with certainty.

It was so different to have a mistress living in a beautiful house luxuriously furnished, and to have one hidden away in a small apartment on the third floor of a hideous barrack-like structure in a dirty street. He had taught her to lead an extravagant life ; it was all very well for her to tell him that she was pleased with her new abode ; economical living was a novelty to her which would soon wear off, and then she would begin to pine for amusements and wealth ; and who was to blame but himself for having taught her such tastes ? Besides, were there not rich men enough in Berlin who would be only too ready to offer her any money she liked in return for favours ? She was a woman, and therefore fond of glitter and show. How long would she resist such offers ? He deserved his fate should she eventually throw him over, for he had grossly deceived her by telling her that he was rich, and that he had the means of enabling her to live as she had done of late to the end of her days. Then he cursed himself for having seduced her, and for having thereby brought so much trouble upon himself. What a fool he had made of himself in throwing his money out of the window in the reckless way he had done, when, with a little judicious economy, he might have made his means last at least for double the time, and so have lengthened out the pleasant days he had had with Lolo. A mistress in poverty was not to his liking ; if he loved a woman he felt that he must lavish all he possessed upon her and satisfy every one of her whims ; she must be a toy, and a pretty one too, else it were better to bear the burden of married

life. Who would care to wear a ring with a dull stone in it? If one wore a ring at all, let it at least hold a precious gem which would attract the attention of others and excite their envy.

He took up a book and tried to read, but his thoughts wandered away from the subject. On the table by his side was a photograph of his cousin Nelly. She had given it to him the day after the ball at the French Embassy, when he had said to her laughingly that he had no intention of ever getting married, but if he changed his mind it would only be to marry her. He looked at the photograph for a long time, then he said to himself: "How pretty she is, to be sure. Would to God that I were married to her, and had no more bothers. Why should I not marry her now, and begin a new life with her? After all, is it not best to do what every one of my friends suggests that I should do, pension off Lolo, and so recover my freedom? What is the use of her going on with me now that I have no money? She is certain to get tired of me under such circumstances, and to go off with some other man, and then I shall look such a fool. Men cannot say I have behaved badly to Lolo; I have ruined myself for her sake, and I am willing to give her half of what remains to me. What claims, after all, has she really got on me? I was the first to love her, and I made her my mistress, it is true; I quite recognise that I was a young ass to have done so, and that it has brought me a great deal more worry than pleasure. Lots of men have done the same, and the world does not judge them very harshly

for it. Moreover, if I had not seduced her then and there the night I met her in the Thiergarten, she would undoubtedly have gone and drowned herself in the river, for she was very depressed, and had just been turned out of her home, and she did not know where to pass the night. A girl is for her age much more experienced and more able to take care of herself than a young man; and if girls choose to let themselves be kissed, they know perfectly well that it has an exciting effect upon men, and that if continued in will be followed by consequences.

After having vented his ill humour upon Lolo he began to pass over into the sentimental state, and to recall to his memory the many delightful episodes of their common existence, the pleasure she had given him, his love for her and her child. Then he burst out crying at the idea that he could wish to abandon her, and cursed himself for having spoken ill of his mistress. That night he was much agitated, and closed his eyes but little.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

DURING the next few weeks nothing of importance happened in the life of Count Klinkenstein, except that he became more and more depressed and out of sorts. The question what was eventually to become of Lolo occupied his thoughts night and day. At moments he would be seized by a desire to see her, and then he would hurry to her house, but after sitting a few moments with her the poverty of her present surroundings would bring back to his memory souvenirs of the pretty boudoir in which he had so often sat by her side, of its soft silk couches, its rich carpets and bright-coloured hangings, and the intoxicating odour of a luxurious and pretty woman's apartment which prevailed in it. Then he would be seized with a fit of nervous irritation, and hasten back to his own rooms, where he would try and assuage his feelings by the use of opiates. Many a night did Lolo try and retain him by her side by reading or singing to him, but in vain ; he would allege that he had a headache and must go home, or that there was an evening party from which he could not very well absent himself, and with such excuses he would slip away and go to the Jockey Club and play at *écarté* to kill time and forget his worries.

As the winter approached the Countess Gisèle re-

turned to Berlin, and then Count Klinkenstein not unfrequently spent the evening in his sister's apartment. She found him much altered since she had last seen him some six months before. He looked irritated, worried, and out of sorts ; his buoyancy of spirits had gone, and he had become serious and thoughtful. With much truth she ascribed this change to the fast life he had been leading ever since he had come to Berlin to join the regiment of the Gardes du Corps, rumours of which had reached her more than once.

One day Count Klinkenstein was sitting in his sister's drawing-room, when she began to attack him again on his mode of living and his prospects.

"Edward, have you not yet got tired of a military life?"

"Certainly not, Gisèle."

"I wish you had."

"Gisèle, why are you so opposed to a military life?"

"It is all very well for a man to be an officer in time of war ; you then help to defend your country, which is a noble thing in its way ; but I do not see what can be the attraction of being an officer all one's life ; teaching loutish peasants their drill day after day must be a stupefying occupation in the long run."

"I do not find it so ; besides, my dear Gisèle, what profession in this country is open to a man of position except the army?"

"I should like to see you looking after your estates, instead of living extravagantly in Berlin and wasting your money."

"I confess that I have been rather extravagant ; it is in my character to be so ; but I do not believe that I should have run through less money had I not entered the army. Anyhow, Gisèle, you may be at ease now, for I have turned over a new leaf, and I am trying to live economically."

"I am glad to hear of it, Edward ; but is this only a passing freak, or a real determination on your part to reform ? It is no use my hiding from you that I have heard a good deal of the way you have been spending your time since you came to Berlin, and I should think that when one has once got into leading that sort of life it is rather difficult to break away from it."

"It is very true, Gisèle," he replied, with a sigh ; "you do not know how hard it is for a man to have to be quiet when for several years he has been leading a fast life."

"And it must be still harder to have to begin this change in the very place connected with so many recollections of a different mode of life."

"It is indeed, Gisèle."

"Why do you not then retire from the army and travel ? It would help you to forget the pernicious souvenirs connected with Berlin."

"It would be very difficult for me to leave Berlin ; in fact, Gisèle, I do not think I can do it."

"It is a pity, Edward ; you want a change, I can see that ; your health is not as good as it ought to be at your age ; you ought to take care of yourself. Do you not think that travelling would do you good ?"

"What is the use of irritating me with suggestions

like that? Of course travelling might do me good ; but you know perfectly well that I cannot leave Berlin, so why talk about it ? ”

“ If you were not so obstinate you might easily find a way ; you have done your duty, for you have served more than three years in the Guards ; you have now a perfect right to retire ; you have led a very pleasant life during that time ; you have done nothing but amuse yourself ; it seems to me that it is about time for you to think a little of your duty to your family and less about your desire to amuse yourself.”

“ Gisèle, you are just like a woman ; you give excellent advice without troubling yourself to inquire whether it can be followed or not. I assure you that even if I retired from the army I would not be able to leave Berlin at present.”

“ If you want to remain here you will of course find excuses for doing so ; but I think that it would be a very good thing if you made an effort and freed yourself for good from all the ties which bind you to this place.”

“ I would soon go to the bad if I had no occupation, Gisèle.”

“ If you lived on your estates you would soon find plenty of things to occupy you.”

“ How can a man live alone in such a place ? I do not think I could stand the monotony of Klinkenstein even if I were married.”

“ Get married and try.”

“ It is easier said than done, Gisèle.”

“ Edward, do you still look upon marriage as a thing to be avoided ? ”

Count Klinkenstein did not reply at once; he looked abashed and ashamed of himself that the last two months should have produced such a change in his feelings. She repeated her question with growing interest as to the reply.

“If I were free, Gisèle, I think I would marry; I am getting sick of the life I have been leading, and after all one must settle down some day, and perhaps the sooner it is done the better.”

“If those are your feelings, why do you not make yourself free? I cannot believe that you are tied to any one by bonds so strong that you cannot break them.”

“It is difficult, Gisèle, to put an end to a friendship of long standing.”

The Countess Gisèle looked at her brother with astonishment; then seizing his hands she said to him with a pleading voice: “Edward, tell me truly, are you secretly married to any one?”

“No,” he replied; “I promised you, Gisèle, some time back, that I would not marry without letting you know. I have gone very far, but I have not gone as far as that.”

“Thank God!” exclaimed the Countess, giving a sigh of relief and kissing her brother; “now, Edward, tell me all; do not hide anything from me; I will not be hard on you whatever you may have done, and the advice I will give you will be for your good.”

“If I told you all I have done, Gisèle, you would call me a fool. I think matters have gone too far to be mended now by good advice.”

“Do not despair, Edward. Things cannot be as

bad as you imagine. You are not married, and that is a great deal."

"It is true I am not married, but I am tied to a woman, Gisèle, in a way, which makes it almost impossible for me to break with her."

"Do you love her?"

"Very much, Gisèle."

"That is a pity," she replied; then, after thinking for a moment, she added: "We are so often deceived when we are young, and believe we love when we do not."

"I think there can be little doubt but that I love her, Gisèle; I have known her for three years, and surely that is sufficient time to find out one's feelings in."

"You have known her for three years, did you say?"

"Yes."

"It is a very long time. What is she?"

"She has no particular profession, Gisèle; in her young days she danced on the stage, but that did not last long; then she became a milliner's assistant, and when I found her she was serving in a shop."

"And for a girl of that class you are going to ruin your career and abstain from marriage?"

"You are a woman," he answered, rather vexed at the contemptuous way in which his sister spoke of Lolo, "and you cannot understand these things; if you knew her you would perhaps find my conduct less inexplicable."

"Have you then quite made up your mind to continue to live with this woman to the end of your days?"

"I suppose there is no help for it, Gisèle," he replied, rather apologetically.

"What a prospect!" she exclaimed.

"It was no doubt foolish of me to begin a liaison with such a girl, but as I have committed this folly I must be punished for it. To tell you the truth, Gisèle, I do not see how I am to get rid of her."

"Why not give her enough to live on, and then leave her?"

"I do not think she would let me go so easily, Gisèle. She says she loves me, and I will give her credit for speaking the truth."

"I am certain, Edward, that numbers of young men have had mistresses before you, but they do not seem to be quite so foolish as you are, for they eventually get rid of them, and then they marry and settle down and are happy ever after."

"Perhaps other people's mistresses do not resemble mine."

"That is all nonsense, Edward; where there is a will there is a way. If you really wish to reform, as you told me just now you did, and to get married, you will find the means of ridding yourself of her. Of course, if your protestations to me are not sincere, you will always find plenty of excuses for keeping with her."

"My dear Gisèle, I really mean what I say; I quite recognise that it was foolish of me to begin this liaison, and that it would be to my advantage to get rid of her, but you will agree with me that I ought not to do anything which is dishonourable; she has claims upon me which I cannot deny; besides, I do

not believe that she will ever consent to an arrangement by which we should be separated, however much money might be offered to her."

"What claims can she have upon you? Is it not rather you who have claims upon her, for have you not already wasted enough money on this woman? I can quite understand that she will object to let you go; a woman in her position does not find a rich patron every day."

"You do not know her, Gisèle; she does not care about money; she is living now very quietly and economically; she is not a woman to accept a compromise."

"Have you broached the subject to her? Did you ever tell her that you would have to leave her some day?"

"No, certainly not; on the contrary, I have promised her that I would never leave her."

"How foolish!"

"I quite see it now that I have grown older and calmer; but, Gisèle, I am so soft-hearted that when in the first transports of my love I found a pretty woman in my arms, it was impossible for me to refuse anything she asked."

"Promises made under such circumstances ought not to be binding."

"I wish they were not."

"Edward, are you then going to resign yourself to your fate, and to make no effort to free yourself from this woman?"

"It is difficult for me to go and tell her that I am tired of her and that we must part; I have no fault to find with her conduct; on the contrary, she could

not have behaved better or been nicer to me. All the same, I should like to recover my liberty ; I begin to believe that on the whole it would be better for us both to be separated, but my difficulty is to find some one who will undertake to negotiate an arrangement which she would be willing to accept ; I do not feel the courage to talk the matter over with her myself ; she would only have to kiss me, and I would be certain to yield again."

"You are very weak, Edward."

"I am afraid it is only too true, Gisèle ; but I cannot help it."

"Have you got no friends who might undertake to communicate with her on the subject ?"

"I might find some one to do it, but still it would be a very disagreeable business ; at the first intimation given to her that we must separate she would probably burst into my rooms in tears, and I would be forced to yield and to give up all idea of it."

"You might leave Berlin while the negotiations were going on."

"I do not think that would save me from her pursuit ; but after all, Gisèle, what is the use of my getting rid of one mistress I am very fond of if it is only to make room for another for whom, perhaps, I would not care, and who might turn out a very disagreeable woman ?"

"I hope, Edward, that as soon as you are free you will marry."

"My dear Gisèle, I would willingly do so if I could find a nice girl who would accept me ; but after the life I have been leading in Berlin, which I regret

to say is pretty notorious, it will be difficult for me to find a suitable wife."

"Of course if you do not exert yourself you will not find one. Do you like your cousin Nelly?"

"Very much, but what is the use of my thinking of marrying her? The old General would never give his consent after all he must have heard about myself and my mistress."

"Go to Nelly herself; if she consents her father will have to give in."

"I would get a refusal if I proposed to her."

"How can you tell until you have tried?"

It was all very well to advise him to get married, but Count Klinkenstein knew perfectly well that one great difficulty stood in the way of it, and that was his child. He did not wish to be parted from her, and he did not believe that Lolo would ever consent to give her up. It was difficult to explain this to his sister, so the Count took refuge in silence.

"You are very obstinate, Edward," began the Countess Gisèle again; "you tell me you wish to get married, and you will take no steps for doing so. Why do you not go to your uncle's country place, and stay a few days there now and again; you would get to know Nelly better, and you could easily find an opportunity of proposing to her if you found she pleased you."

"I think it is very probable that she would please me, but it seems to me ridiculous that I should propose to her until I know that I am free. Before I can do anything I must first come to an arrangement with my mistress."

"Well, then, the sooner you set to work the better ; it is a mistake to dawdle in such matters."

"Alas ! Gisèle, she has claims upon me which it is difficult for me to deny, and which must be satisfied before I can be free."

"What claims can she possibly have ? As I said before, you have spent quite enough money on her ; it is rather you who have claims on her than she on you. Allow her a pension, sufficient to enable her to live comfortably, and then you will have done all that can be expected of you."

"Do you think so, Gisèle ?"

"Certainly I do."

"But you do not know all the circumstances of the case."

"Tell me them then."

"It is difficult to do so, Gisèle ; I cannot very well tell you all that has passed between me and my mistress."

"Edward, I am doing my best in your own interests to separate you from her, so you might be frank and let me know whatever real obstacles there may be in the way of an arrangement."

"It would be no good if I made a clean breast of it ; there are some facts one cannot very well get over."

"I shall never forgive you, Edward, if you do not tell me everything. It is not out of mere curiosity that I want to know your secrets, but because I am trying to find a way of saving you from ruining your life. I think you might confide in me."

"I would like to, and yet it is not easy to tell you the whole truth."

"Is it so terrible as all that? Do tell me what has taken place between you both."

"You really wish to know it, Gisèle?"

"Yes."

He hesitated for a moment before he replied, then he made an effort and said: "She has got a child; it is impossible for me to abandon it, and I do not believe that she will give it up, so we must remain together. Find another solution to this dilemma if you can."

"You have got a child?"

"Yes, Gisèle."

"Is it a girl or a boy?"

"A very pretty little girl."

The Countess Gisèle remained thoughtful for a time, then rising she went up to her brother, who was walking up and down the room, his usual habit when he was excited, and putting her hand upon his shoulder she said to him, "Edward, I have no children; let me adopt the little girl if you think the mother can be induced to give her up; I would not even object to letting her occasionally see the child."

"It is very kind of you, Gisèle, to offer to do this for me, but I am afraid that she will never consent to being separated from her child."

"It would be to the child's advantage that I should adopt her; she would thereby at once obtain a social position which she cannot expect to attain if she remains with her mother. Promise me that you will do your best to persuade her to agree to this arrangement."

“Give me a few days’ time to think over it ; I do not like to do anything in a hurry.”

“How undecided you always are !”

“I cannot change my character, Gisèle, and this is a very disagreeable business you wish me to embark upon.”

“Then the sooner you get it over the better.”

“You must really give me time to screw up my courage to the sticking-point before I tell my mistress that I am sick of her, and that we must part.”

“It is not necessary to do it in that crude manner ; you can gradually explain to her that it is better for you both not to see each other any more.”

“I will give you an answer in a few days,” replied Count Klinkenstein, who, to avoid further discussion, kissed his sister and taking up his hat left the room.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

AS Count Klinkenstein walked home, he pondered a good deal over his sister's proposal to adopt the child. It seemed to him a most satisfactory solution of his difficulty ; it was in the child's interest, and, therefore, he thought Lolo could hardly refuse to give her consent. He made up his mind that he would begin to talk to Lolo about the possibility of their having to separate some day, and he would note how she took it. He meant gradually to accustom her to contemplate the possibility of such an occurrence, so as to render it less of a surprise when one day he would screw up his courage and announce to her definitely that they must cease to live together ; but before it came to that pass he must have become engaged to his cousin Nelly, so as to render it impossible for him to yield to Lolo's tears and to return to her.

On reaching his rooms, he was informed by his servant that a visitor had been waiting some time for him. With some curiosity Count Klinkenstein opened the door of his sitting-room, and saw, half asleep in an arm-chair, the portly form of Isaac Engel, the money-lender, with whom he had had of late more than one important monetary transaction. His first impulse was to retire at once ; but the noise he

made on entering woke his visitor, who rose at once, and after making a profuse bow apologised for having been caught napping.

"May I ask what has brought you here?" inquired the Count.

"I have come to settle a little business with you," said Herr Engel in his softest voice. "If this moment is inconvenient to you, I will return a little later."

"I suppose you have come to ask me to pay you your confounded money; well, I have not got any at present, so you must kindly wait if you wish to be paid."

"I am fully aware, Count, that you are in financial difficulties, and it is for that very reason that I have come to make some inquiries. You know that I hold bills of yours for a sum of nearly 200,000 marks, and they fall due very shortly; I should like to ascertain whether I can expect to be paid or not."

"At the present moment I do not see the slightest chance of your receiving your money," replied the Count, with an irritating tone of levity in his voice.

Herr Engel did not lose his temper; on the contrary, he became more civil than ever, and replied: "Nothing grieves me more than to put you to an inconvenience, Count, but you will easily understand that it is not a light thing for a person in business to lose so large a sum, and therefore I am sure you will excuse me if I take reasonable steps to protect myself against any loss."

Count Klinkenstein was rather put out by his visitor's civility; he had expected an impudent reply

which would have given him an excuse to have the money-lender ejected from his rooms ; now it was necessary to answer civilly, so he bade Herr Engel take a seat, and then said to him : "How do you propose to recover the money if I have none to give you? The best thing you can do is to let the bills run on a bit ; they are certain to be paid in the end."

"I wish I could persuade myself to believe it," replied the money-lender ; "but we men of business cannot afford to be credulous, therefore I must inform you that I will require very good security for the payment of my debt if I renew the bills for a time, or I will see myself compelled to enforce payment of them when they fall due in a few weeks."

"What is the use of trying to recover money from me when I have already told you that I have not got any? You had much better not bother about payment just now."

"I am not of your opinion, Count ; I see I will have to take steps to protect myself."

"What steps can you take, I should like to know?"

"I will communicate with your late guardian, Count Eckstein ; he knows the state of your estates, and will be able to suggest something."

At the mention of his uncle's name Count Klinkenstein jumped off his seat. He was always in dread that on account of his extravagance he might be put under *curatel*, that is to say, that the management of his estates would be taken out of his control on the recommendation of his family, and that he would receive only a portion of the rental, the remainder going towards the paying off of his debts. When

Max Vogel, his business agent, was last in Berlin, he had confessed to him that he owed 300,000 marks, but the 200,000 marks he owed Herr Engel were not included in that sum, so that his total indebtedness amounted to about half a million of marks.

What a row his uncle would make if he heard of this state of things! thought Count Klinkenstein to himself. It would never do to let him know of it, especially at a moment when he thought of proposing to his cousin Nelly, and of arranging affairs with Lolo by settling a considerable annuity upon her. What was he to do? In a tearful voice he exclaimed: "For goodness' sake, Herr Engel, have pity on me! Do not let my uncle hear anything about my debts, or there will be the devil to pay. Give me time, only give me time, and I will pay you every penny I owe you."

"That is all very fine," replied the money-lender; "but I really must require something more satisfactory than verbal assurances that I will receive my money."

"Could you not extend the dates of the bills for a month or two? That would give me time to devise means for meeting my liabilities. I had no idea the day of payment was so near, or I would have looked about to find money to pay you with. I have no intention of robbing you, Herr Engel."

"I never for a moment would think you capable of that," exclaimed the money-lender, throwing up his hands; "but, Count, I really do not see how you will be more able to pay your debts three months hence than now. Do you not think that after all it is better to come to some settlement now instead of putting off

the matter for a few months? You also owe a great deal of money to other persons."

"Oh, do I? If you say so, Herr Engel, I suppose it must be true."

"Your liabilities to others approach the sum of 300,000 marks."

"Oh! you know the exact sum, Herr Engel? I was not aware that you were so well informed. You must have a wonderful head for finance."

"It is part of my business to be well acquainted with the private affairs of my clients."

"If you know my private affairs so intimately you will see the impossibility of my paying you just at present."

"You might borrow the money from your uncle, Count Eckstein, on easy terms and pay me off. That is the course which I would venture to suggest to you."

"What an abominable idea! Do you suppose that my uncle would listen for a moment to such a proposal? You do not know what sort of a man he is."

"Then I am afraid I will have to consult him as to the best means of recovering what is owed me."

Count Klinkenstein was at a loss to know what to reply. He was certain that if his uncle heard of the real state of his financial affairs there would be an end of his proposed marriage with his cousin Nelly, and he saw that if he did not marry soon he would go back to Lolo and never get rid of her. It was necessary to take a decisive step at once, so he begged Herr Engel to excuse him for a moment, and he then left the room to collect his thoughts and to arrive at a decision. When he returned, after a short interval, he said to

the money-lender, "I have a proposal to make to you which I hope you will see your way to accepting."

"I am glad of that," replied Herr Engel.

"If I tell it you it must be confidentially, and I hope you will not repeat it to any one."

"You may count upon my discretion," said Herr Engel, making a bow.

"What I have to tell you is this : I am going to marry an heiress shortly."

"I congratulate you sincerely," exclaimed the money-lender with alacrity ; "it is one of the safest, most satisfactory, and expeditious ways of recruiting a damaged fortune. May I ask who the young lady is ?"

"It is impossible for me to tell you her name at present, for I have not yet proposed to her."

"Oh ! I thought it was all settled."

"I have every reason to believe that I will be accepted as soon as I propose, so you need be under no anxiety about your money ; you may look upon it as paid."

"But supposing the young lady were to refuse you ?"

"If you make a fuss to get paid at once, I think it quite possible that the marriage will not come off, for if her father hears that I am pecuniarily much involved it is very likely that he will decline to have me as his son-in-law. The whole thing will be settled one way or another in the next few weeks, so it is to your interest to let my bills run on for, say, another three months, and you will then be paid in full."

"Very well," replied Herr Engel, after thinking the matter over for a short time ; "I will defer claiming

payment for another three months on condition that you sign me a paper binding yourself to pay 10 per cent. interest on my money for that period."

"I agree," cried the Count delighted; "send me the document whenever you like and I will sign it. Thank God that this business is settled for the moment! Good-bye, Herr Engel; I am very much obliged to you."

The money-lender made a profound bow and left the room.

Count Klinkenstein had impulsively come to a decision, and he began to think himself a strong character; he was going to break with Lolo and marry his cousin Nelly; it was impossible to draw back now; the fatal step had to be taken, and the sooner it was done the better. So he sat down and wrote to his uncle that he would pay him a visit in the country in a few days. He was in a state of high glee that in a very short time he would know whether Nelly would marry him or not, and that if she did he would again be in possession of a comfortable income. When one has indulged in the art of throwing money out of the window it is somewhat difficult to accustom oneself to petty economies. Count Klinkenstein flattered himself that, once he was engaged to the Countess Nelly, Lolo would be willing to accept his proposals; she was a sensible girl, he said to himself; the illusions of youth vanish very soon, and she would see that it was impossible for them both to live together unmarried to the end of their days, and that it would be better to separate amicably, especially as provision was made for the education of the little girl. It was

really not fair of him to expect Lolo to remain his mistress for ever now he was poor, and to give up her chances of meeting some rich man who might marry her. It would be selfish of him to do so. Let her regain her freedom ; he could never forget the love he had borne her ; but as his cousin Nelly was a nice girl and he was already fond of her, he hoped that should they be married he would grow truly attached to her.

Having obtained a short leave of absence, Count Klinkenstein, on a cold December morning, took the train which was to bring him to his uncle's Pomeranian retreat. At the station he found his cousin Nelly waiting for him, and she drove him herself to the house. It was a good omen, he thought, and augured well for the success of his mission. The old General received him affectionately, though with a certain reserve, which Count Klinkenstein attributed to a desire on the part of his uncle to show some displeasure at the extravagance of his nephew and late ward. He was not very much put out by it, for he had come to ask for Nelly's hand, which was the very thing he believed his uncle had always wished him to do.

Count Klinkenstein made the most of his time, amusing himself immensely, always full of attentions to Nelly, accompanying her in all her expeditions, and frequently skating with her on the village pond. Several days passed in this way, and the attractions of Nelly nearly effaced for the moment all recollection of Lolo ; yet from day to day he put off the interview with his uncle which would decide his fate, and in

which he would ask for permission to propose to his cousin.

The time for his return to Berlin was drawing near, and it was absolutely necessary that he should at last face Count Eckstein and demand his daughter in marriage. So one morning he braced himself up and entered his uncle's working-room, where he found him deeply occupied in going over the accounts of his large estates.

"I hope I am not disturbing you?" said Count Klinkenstein, who would have been very glad if his uncle had replied in the affirmative.

"Come in, Edward, if you have anything to say to me," replied Count Eckstein, looking up from his work and laying down his pen. "Take a seat; I have been wanting for some time to talk to you about various matters. I am glad you have come to me yourself."

Count Klinkenstein's heart fell; he had come to talk about his love for Nelly, and he felt that instead of having a conversation with the old General on an agreeable subject he was going to encounter a storm, and be perhaps subjected to a very nasty interrogatory.

He took a seat and waited for his uncle to break ground.

"My dear Edward," began the General; "I am sorry to hear that your financial affairs are getting very involved. I do not wish to be hard upon young officers; I know to what temptations they are exposed, and that every opportunity is given them for spending and borrowing money; but I am told on credible authority that you have seriously impaired your

fortune by not only living extravagantly, but by literally throwing your money out of the window."

"People do exaggerate so," replied Count Klinkenstein, very much annoyed at the prospect of being lectured on the state of his finances at the very moment he was going to ask for his cousin's hand. "Though I may have spent some money there yet remains plenty for me to live comfortably on."

"Perhaps ; but not in a way in which a Count Klinkenstein should live. Your fortune was not so great that you could afford to lead a riotous life. A man who is the bearer of a great name, and the owner of an historic castle like yours, should bear in mind what was expected of him, and should, therefore, nurse his fortune, so as to be able to keep up proper state when living among his people in his ancestral home."

"Oh, bother the place ! I have no intention of ever living there if I can help it."

"If those are your real sentiments, Edward, I am sorry for you. The duty of a nobleman is to live among his people and to be a father to them. They should all know him personally, and look up to him and honour him. It is a pity to see a nobleman forget the duties of his position, and prefer to waste his substance on women of loose character. It is all very well for a *nouveau riche* to keep an ostentatious and luxurious mistress, it does not do at all for a gentleman of old family."

"Every one has his own tastes, and for my part I would willingly exchange the Castle of Klinkenstein for a bright and pretty villa in a nice neighbourhood."

The old General shrugged his shoulders and heaved a sigh. "It is lamentable," he said, "that our young men should shirk the responsibilities which their ancestors have placed upon them. The true nobleman knows how to bear his honours, and how to submit to any burden they may impose. I have a great contempt, my dear Edward, for the young man who gives himself up to effeminacy and vice."

"You are very hard on me ; I really do not know what I have done to deserve these accusations ; I have amused myself, no doubt, perhaps a little wildly, for which I am sincerely sorry ; but other young officers have done the same."

"Your debts, I am told, are very large."

"I mean to economise now, and to pay them off by instalments."

"I am really glad, Edward, to hear of that resolution on your part ; but you will find that it is easier to make debts than to pay them off."

"I hope to pay off everything in a few years."

"You are very sanguine, Edward ; perhaps you do not realise how much you owe."

"Is it so very much ?"

"About three or four hundred thousand marks, I am told."

"Oh ! that must be a mistake. How could I have spent so much money in so short a time ?"

"It is not so very difficult when there is a woman to help one. But I will not blame you if you now really wish to reform."

"I really do wish to do so."

"Then, Edward, if you have come to consult me

how you had best set to work to pay off your liabilities I am at your service."

"I did not quite come for that," replied Count Klinkenstein, rather taken aback by the suggestion.

"Then, pray, what has brought you here, Edward?"

Count Klinkenstein began to stammer a reply: "You see I have come on a very important business, but rather difficult for me to explain. I thought I ought to consult you before taking so grave a step, as you are my uncle and you were so kind to me while you were my guardian; only I am afraid you will not approve of it or give your consent; it rather puts me off not to know what answer you will return before I ask."

"You need not be alarmed, Edward; you know that I would go a great deal out of my way to render you a service. Pray tell me frankly what has brought you here."

"I should like to marry."

Count Eckstein jumped up from his seat as if he had been shot; then with a voice loud enough to have been heard by a whole regiment he shouted at his nephew, "Edward, you do not mean to say that you are going to marry your mistress?"

"Oh no! it never entered into my head," replied Count Klinkenstein, very much irritated at the suggestion.

The old General walked up to his mantelpiece and leant against it, for he felt the necessity of support after the shock he had received; then taking out his pocket-handkerchief he slowly wiped away a bead of

perspiration from his brow which the thought that a Count Klinkenstein was going to contract a *mésalliance* with a kept woman had brought there. Then there followed a dead silence, during which Count Klinkenstein was very fidgety in his chair, and felt half inclined to leave the room and to put off asking for Nelly's hand to another day; but just as he was hesitating what to do, Count Eckstein turned round and said to him: "Who then is it that you wish to marry, Edward?"

To so direct a question there could be but one reply, so Count Klinkenstein made a great effort and mumbled out: "I should like to marry Nelly."

"Nelly, Edward?"

"Yes, and I hope you will give your consent to it."

Count Eckstein was too taken by surprise to answer the question at once, so putting his hands behind his back he began walking up and down his room to gain time and to think over his reply. Having made up his mind he went up to his nephew, and laying one hand on his shoulder he said to him: "My dear Edward, there was a time when nothing would have pleased me better than to have seen you both united, but you will understand that many things have occurred of late which must make me hesitate to give my consent. It is my duty to bear in mind the future happiness of my daughter, and I am not at all sure that she would be happy if she were married to you. You have seriously impaired your fortune, so that it is natural that I should not be in a hurry to entrust the large fortune which my daughter will inherit from her mother into your keeping. One must prove oneself

worthy of confidence before one can expect others to have trust in one."

"I have already said that I intended to reform as soon as I am married," replied Count Klinkenstein, getting very angry at the prospect of being refused Nelly, and having to listen instead to a homily from his uncle.

"My dear Edward, it is all very well for a young man to come and say that he will reform when he is married ; what I want him to do is to reform before. Now you have been leading a very fast life and you have contracted expensive habits ; that does not promise well for future married happiness. You are wanting in steadiness."

"You accuse me of every sort of vice as if I were a thoroughly abandoned person. I think you are going a little too far ; if you were not my uncle I would not stand such language from you."

Count Klinkenstein grew very red in the face after this outburst, but he was gradually working himself into a rage against his uncle, for he saw that he was going to be refused Nelly's hand, at least for the present, and he knew that if that took place the money-lenders would come down upon him for their money, which would put him in a very difficult financial position ; and besides, he was afraid that if he did not marry his cousin very soon he would be certain to go back to Lolo, and then he would probably never succeed in breaking with her.

Count Eckstein remained very unmoved at this outburst of temper on the part of his nephew, and replied very quietly : "It is no use your getting angry,

Edward, because I tell you some home truths and am not in a hurry to give away my daughter to a man of whose conduct I do not approve. It is a notorious fact that you have been living with a mistress during the last two or three years whose luxurious ways have been the common talk of Berlin. Who tells me that if I were to allow you to marry Nelly you would not squander her fortune upon this woman?"

"I am not a blackguard!" shouted Count Klinkenstein in reply.

"I do not for a moment wish to accuse you of being one, but what I say is that a man of weak character is very much influenced by his associations, and that when one has lived several years with a pretty woman one does not find it so easy to separate from her. You have not even told me whether you have definitely separated yourself from your mistress or not."

It was a disagreeable question for Count Klinkenstein to have to answer, but his blood was up, and at that moment he did not much care what he said to his uncle, so he replied: "It is no business of yours to ask me what I have done with my mistress, but if you particularly wish to know I will tell you; I have not as yet got rid of her."

"You have not got rid of your mistress, Edward, and you expect me to allow you to marry my daughter?"

"I intend to tell her she must go as soon as I am engaged to Nelly."

"Then you will have to wait a considerable time before you are. The man who aspires to Nelly's hand must prove himself to be an honourable gentleman;

I do not understand your coming to ask for her under present circumstances. You tell me you wish to reform ; it is not after marriage that I want to see you do so, but before. If you loved Nelly you would immediately have got rid of that other woman. I will tell you my final decision : I will not deprive you of all hope ; I will give you a year's time within which to show me that you have reformed ; if at the end of that time I hear you have been leading the life of a decent gentleman I will give my consent to the marriage, provided my daughter is willing to take you. I do not ask anything superhuman from you, but I want to see that you can put a curb upon your passions. If you love Nelly, you will be able to do that much for her sake."

"Then you refuse me Nelly?"

"Yes, for the present."

Count Klinkenstein felt that if he had to wait a year he would never marry his cousin ; he knew that he could not live any length of time without a female companion, and if he were not soon married he would go back to his mistress. He was seized with a fit of fury against his uncle, whom he looked upon as the wicked destroyer of his hopes of happiness, and suddenly shaking his fist in the old General's face he cried : "You refuse me Nelly ; well, let the consequences be on your head !"

"You forget yourself, Edward."

"You are an infernal old fool, that is what you are !" shrieked Count Klinkenstein, losing all control over himself.

Count Eckstein drew himself up, and in a very

quiet and dignified tone said to his nephew : " Edward, it is not usual for a young officer to speak to his superior in that way, but I do not hold you responsible for your words ; you have lost your temper and do not know what you are saying, and I shall therefore ask you to leave the room until you have recovered a control of it."

Count Klinkenstein left the room as he was bid without saying another word ; but he had no sooner gone out than he felt ashamed of himself for having used such violent language ; he was too proud, however, to go back and beg his uncle's pardon, so he summoned his servant, and ordered him to pack up his things and to take them to the station, while he himself would walk there and return to Berlin by the next train. He felt that he could not remain any longer in the house after the disagreeable episode which had taken place.

He went out, passing through the hot-house attached to the main building. As he opened the door leading into the garden he saw the Countess Nelly coming towards him with her skates in her hand ; he could not avoid meeting her, so he remained standing where he was.

" Edward," she said to him as she came up, " why did you not come and skate with me on the village pond as you promised me this morning that you would ? "

" I had some business to transact with your father, Nelly ; it prevented me from coming."

" What has happened ? You look quite upset, Edward."

"I have just had a row with your father ; he was very nasty to me, so I am going back to Berlin at once."

"You are going to leave us, Edward ?"

"I cannot remain here, Nelly, after what your father told me."

"But what was it all about, Edward ?"

"It is impossible for me to tell you, Nelly ; perhaps your father will let you know when I am gone."

The Countess Nelly blushed, for it flashed across her mind that the quarrel had been about herself. She had loved her cousin for some time, but without so much as mentioning it to anybody ; had he now asked her father's leave to propose to her and been refused ?

"Edward, the quarrel will blow over soon," she said to him, putting her hand on his shoulder. "Do not go ; stay here and all will be right."

"I cannot, Nelly."

"I hope at least, Edward, that we may meet again before long, if not here then in Berlin."

"I do not think that it is possible, Nelly ; your father does not seem to wish me to see you often."

"Oh !" exclaimed the Countess Nelly, turning pale and leaning for support against the door of the hot-house. Her presentiment was true ; her cousin was turned out of the house because he wished to make love to her. "Must we not see each other again ?" she said to him, making an effort to recover her presence of mind.

"I wish we could be always together, Nelly ; but an evil fate seems to dog my footsteps. I think I bring ill-luck to any one I am connected with."

“Do not be dejected, Edward ; have but a little courage and patience and all will come right. My father cannot have any real dislike to you, for he has always spoken of you to me in terms of affection. There cannot be any serious subject of dispute between you, and if he lost his temper and said anything disagreeable he is certain to be sorry for it later. Do not go away, Edward.”

“For your sake, Nelly, I would willingly remain ; but I know your father would prefer to see me gone, so I dare not stay.”

“It is a pity, Edward ; but directly after Christmas we shall be in Berlin for the court balls, and then we must see a great deal of each other.”

“Yes, Nelly,” he answered, looking rather foolish, for it was evident that she cared for him, otherwise she would not have spoken as she had done. What a pity it was that he could not marry her there and then, and cut himself adrift from Berlin and its associations, and go and live quietly with her in some distant country for a few years. He had never before so vividly realised what a fool he had made of himself in forming a liaison with a woman which it was so difficult to break.

For a short time they both remained looking at each other without speaking ; then Count Klinkenstein, finding the situation intolerable, said that he must go if he wished to catch his train. He felt shy before his cousin now that he thought that she loved him, so he took her hand and kissed it ceremoniously ; then the Countess Nelly plucked a red flower from a rose tree in the hot-house, and, giving it to him, said in a

low voice, "Keep it, Edward, and think of me sometimes."

He took the flower and, having pressed it against his lips, left without saying another word, while the Countess Nelly, leaning against the door of the hot-house, watched him until he was out of sight.

CHAPTER XXXV.

ON arriving at Berlin Count Klinkenstein drove straight to his rooms. He found there several letters from Olga Zanelli, begging him in almost hysterical terms to come and see her, and his old servant Hans informed him that she had come herself the day before to inquire what had become of him.

This news was very disagreeable to Count Klinkenstein ; he hated scenes, especially when he felt himself in the wrong, and he could not deny that he had behaved very badly to Lolo in going away for a week without so much as letting her know of it. He was in a nervous, depressed state, and he dreaded her arrival at any moment, so he went out and called on his sister, whom he happened to find in.

“Already back, Edward ?” exclaimed the Countess Gisèle, when she saw her brother come in. “How have you got on with Nelly ?”

“It is all up, Gisèle ; your idea has come to nothing. It is impossible for me to marry Nelly, because I have been turned out of my uncle’s house.”

“Turned out of the house, Edward ! What on earth did you do ?”

“My uncle was singularly unreasonable. He lost his temper, and then we used violent language, and so I thought it best to leave.”

"Edward, did you ask his permission to marry Nelly?"

"Yes, and he refused."

"I wonder at that."

"Well, to tell you the truth, Gisèle, he did not absolutely refuse, but he coupled his permission with so many conditions that I did not see my way to accept them."

"Tell me what they were?"

"I do not quite remember them all, but the pith of what he wanted was to see me reform my way of living, as if the very fact that I proposed to get married was not a proof of my desire to do so; he also expects me to put away my mistress at once before I know whether in the end I shall be allowed to marry Nelly or not—that is asking too much. Then, finally, he told me that if I reformed to his satisfaction he would think about letting me marry Nelly in a year's time. The long and short of it, Gisèle, is that I cannot wait a year, so I must give up the idea of making Nelly my wife."

"You are very unreasonable, Edward, for after all a year is not such a very long time to wait."

"That is a matter of opinion, Gisèle; for me it seems an age."

"Do you really care about Nelly?"

"I quite believe, Gisèle, that if I saw more of her I would fall desperately in love with her. The more I see her the more I like her."

"Did you propose to her, Edward?"

"I did not find an opportunity, otherwise I think I would have done so."

“Edward, do you think she cares about you?”

“It is difficult for me to say, but to judge from her manner I thought she did not seem to have any objection to me.”

“If you will take my advice, Edward, you would go to your mistress and explain the situation; if she is a woman who loves you she will make the sacrifice and give you back your freedom; if she does not very much care about you, but is in want of money, an arrangement can easily be made. Once you are rid of her try and lead a quiet life for a year to please your uncle; self-control will do you a world of good; trust me for the rest, and Nelly will be yours before the year is over.”

“I wish I could think so, Gisèle; but I see innumerable difficulties in the way of it. First of all, I do not believe that my uncle will pardon me in a hurry; and in the second place, I know that my mistress will not let me go without making a violent scene, and what excuse can I make for my conduct? I am not even engaged to be married. Should we separate tomorrow without my being first married, I feel certain that in less than a month my mistress would have got round me again and we should renew our relations. If my uncle would only not be so obstinate, and would let me be at least engaged to Nelly now, though the marriage might be put off for a year, things would be very different; my mistress would then understand that it was hopeless to expect me to go back to her, and she would come to terms; and I being bound by my engagement to Nelly, and knowing that I must be married to her within a year, would not feel the same temptation to go back to my mistress.”

“ Have a little patience, Edward, and all will come right ; but I do implore of you to separate yourself from your mistress at once. If you have not got the courage to tell her that you must leave her, then I will go and tell it her myself.”

“ For Heaven’s sake, Gisèle, do not do that ; I will let her know quite soon enough.”

“ Edward, you will go on putting it off and putting it off until at last you will be afraid to tell her, and then you will end by remaining together for life. Get freed from your mistress as soon as ever you can, and then when Nelly comes to Berlin after Christmas, propose to her. If she accepts you all will be right. I undertake to get her father’s consent to your marrying her after a few months’ delay.”

“ I suppose I ought to obey you, Gisèle, but it is a painful business to have to tell this woman, who has committed no fault, that I am sick of her.”

“ Edward, promise me to tell her definitely, to-night, or at latest to-morrow, what you have resolved to do.”

Count Klinkenstein reluctantly gave his consent, for he felt that after all his sister was right ; in his position he could not marry Olga Zanelli, and as he was no longer able to keep her in the style he thought proper there was nothing left for him to do but to get rid of her. At times he certainly felt some twitches of conscience, for he had promised Lolo that he would never marry any one but herself, but then, he argued with himself, such promises had been given when he was young and inexperienced, and at moments when he was intoxicated with love desires, and then a young

man could really not be held responsible for what he said or promised.

After leaving his sister, Count Klinkenstein sent a telegram to his mistress to tell her that he had just returned from the country, and that he would visit her that evening ; then he called on his friend Sydney Gray to talk matters over with him, and to inform him that he had promised his sister to get rid of Lolo and to pension her off. He met nothing but commendation from his friend with regard to the resolution he had at last taken.

"Come, let us dine together," said Count Klinkenstein to his friend ; "it is already late, and I feel that I must be kept braced up to the proper pitch if I am to break the dreadful news to poor Lolo to-night. And mind, Gray, all through dinner you must impress upon me that it is my duty to get rid of her, or I am afraid that at the last moment I shall lose heart and not tell her."

"Very well," replied Sydney Gray, "I am at your service."

So they went out and entered a quiet and unfashionable restaurant, where the tablecloths were not very scrupulously clean, and where the glasses seemed never to be thoroughly rinsed out.

"This place is in keeping with my present reduced fortune," said Count Klinkenstein, wiping the forks and knives with his napkin, "but I have not often been in such a beastly hole ; however, there is this advantage, that I know nobody here."

A waiter came up and inquired what kind of beer they would like to order.

“None of your beastly beer,” shouted Count Klinkenstein, in reply ; “it is a hideous, depressing beverage when one has to face a most disagreeable business. Bring me a bottle of your very best champagne ; however bad it is it will still help to raise my spirits ; and to tell you the truth, my dear Gray, I think I shall have to make myself nearly drunk if I am to tell Lolo to-night that it is all over between us.”

Throughout dinner the sole topic of conversation was Olga Zanelli and how sensible Count Klinkenstein was in getting rid of her. Sydney Gray did his best to keep his friend to his resolution, but when dinner was over the Count felt that his courage was not yet quite up to the mark, so he called for liqueurs, and while sipping some half a dozen glasses filled with different kinds of them he muttered to himself that he had undertaken a very nasty business, but that he would carry it out like a man, and that no amount of tears would move him from his resolution.

They rose and went out, walking together a little way down the street. It was a cold and disagreeable night, and it was beginning to drizzle. An empty cab passed them, which Count Klinkenstein stopped, as he said he would drive to his mistress. Sydney Gray bade him good-night. It was not exactly what the Count had expected, as he had hoped that his friend would have offered to accompany him and see him safely through his difficult ordeal—it would have given him courage to be accompanied by some one on such an occasion ; but as Sydney Gray had not spontaneously offered to do so, he felt ashamed to ask him to come ;

he therefore called out to him : " Gray, I will get this business over as quickly as possible, and then meet you at the club and tell you the result."

" So much the better," replied Sydney Gray, walking away.

Then Count Klinkenstein entered his cab and slammed the door, and the old vehicle began to rattle over the stony pavement in the direction of Lolo's abode.

What was Olga Zanelli doing meanwhile ?

Ever since she had received her lover's telegram late in the afternoon she had been in a state of hysterical excitement. It was now more than a week that she had not seen him or heard from him, and not one tiny little word of explanation had he sent. They had never yet been parted from each other for so long a time, and the solitude in which she had been left seemed to her intolerable. No wonder she kissed the telegram over and over again which brought her the good news of his speedy return.

As night drew on she became more and more impatient, and every time she heard a cab driving up the street she would rush to the window and open it, and look out till it had passed her door and disappeared in the darkness. Then she would go back and sit by the fire, and heap up wooden logs upon it, for he would be cold when he came, she thought to herself, as she listened to the sleet driving against the window-panes.

On entering the street in which Olga Zanelli lived Count Klinkenstein cried to the coachman to pull up ; he intended to walk the few steps to her house, as

it would give him a few minutes' time to finally settle in his mind how he should begin the conversation with her. On reaching the door of the house he began slowly to ascend the long flight of steps which led to her apartment. Lolo was not slow to hear footsteps on the staircase. She jumped up and listened ; they became slower and slower ; they were close to her landing ; they stopped suddenly, for Lolo, certain that it was her lover who was approaching, had thrown open the inner door of her apartment ; the noise she made in doing so frightened the Count ; he lost heart ; he felt he could not face his mistress ; he turned to fly, but before he could do so she was in his arms.

They remained silent for a few moments, during which he felt her kiss upon his lips. When she was able to speak she said : "How nice of you to come, Edward ; I thought for a moment you would never return. You are wet and cold ; come in and sit by the fire and talk to me."

She took his hand and led him in, while he followed mechanically. She took off his wet cloak and made him sit in an arm-chair by the fire, while she knelt by his side ; then for the first time Count Klinkenstein bent down and kissed her forehead, and she heard herself called by tender names, and from the tone of his voice she knew that she was still loved, and tears of joy began to roll down her cheeks, for she had thought for a moment that he had ceased to care for her.

He was glad she was silent, it gave him time to think ; so he continued to pass his hand gently over

her wavy hair to show his tenderness for her and to comfort her, for he hated to see a woman cry ; then Lolo wiped her tears, of which she felt ashamed, and seizing his hand drew it to her mouth and kissed it, and felt happy.

The maid entered the room, and brought some tea.

"You must feel cold," she said ; "take a cup, Edward, it will warm you."

He accepted, so she rose and prepared it, and brought it to him, and then she sat on his knees and pressed her face against his, and he made her drink out of the same cup as himself, as was his wont in the first days of their love.

"Why have you kept away from me so long, Edward ?" she said to him ; "you might have told me the reason ; but you never sent me a word. You do not know how miserable I have been all this time ; every day I waited anxiously for a message from you and none came."

She murmured this into his ear gently and low, not in a tone of command expecting a reply, but as if she were a petitioner begging a favour.

Man is but man, weak and easily yielding to temptation, so it is not to be wondered at that at that moment Count Klinkenstein felt that it was impossible for him to tell the woman he had loved, and at the bottom of his heart still loved, and who was so fond of him, that he had resolved to put her away and to marry his cousin. It would be too cruel to tell her the whole truth at once, it must be done slowly and by degrees.

"I had to go, Lolo, and see my uncle, and I have

been so very busy all the time I was away that I could not find a moment to write to you. I had to consult my uncle about my money affairs ; they are in a very bad way."

He could think of nothing better to say to her ; she would probably believe it.

"Are you in want of money, Edward?"

"I am not exactly in want of money," he replied ; "but my affairs generally are very much involved."

"And it is all my fault," she said, "for I have run through your money. What a pity you did not tell me before that you could not afford to let me live as I did."

"If any one is to be blamed it is myself, Lolo ; but let us not talk of this disagreeable subject ; what we have to think about now is how you are to live. What irritates me in all this business is that I am no longer able to allow you all the money you want."

"But I want very little now, Edward. I will cut down my expenses to almost nothing. Let me hire a small house outside Berlin, they are cheaper there than in the town, and we shall see more of each other than we have done of late, will we not, Edward ? They say that love in a cottage is more real than love in a palace."

Love in a cottage ! The very last thing which suited Count Klinkenstein. He dropped the subject, and muttered indistinctly in reply that he was not yet a beggar, and that there was no necessity for her to go and live in the suburbs.

She saw he was irritated about something, so she asked him if he would like her to sing, for she

knew that it had a soothing effect upon him. He replied in the affirmative ; it would save him from having to talk to her.

She rose and went to the piano, while the Count stretched himself in his chair, and fostered by the music and the genial warmth of the fire he fell into meditations. Every one of her songs called up so many recollections from the day of their first meeting at the Magdeburg station to quite recent times. At moments he felt quite angry that her songs no longer affected him as they used to do, and he began to ask himself what it was which made a man's feelings towards a woman change apparently without any reason, and whether if he married Nelly he was also to expect that after a few years of a common existence his feelings towards her would become those of indifference, tempered by an occasional paroxysm of desire of less and less frequent recurrence. Was it worth while marrying if such was the end of matrimony? While occupying himself with such thoughts he fell asleep in his chair.

For a time Lolo went on playing and singing, but when she noticed that he was asleep she ceased, and moving silently about the room went and took some needlework, and then came and sat near him by the fire.

"He must be tired," she said to herself, "and he must have so many worries about his money affairs ; let him sleep quietly ; it will soothe him. No wonder he is irritable with so many things to think about. What a pity it is that he did not let me know long ago the true state of affairs ; we might have begun

economising before, and lived just as happily together, and saved ourselves all this present trouble."

She continued sewing, casting glances from time to time at her lover to see if he was awake.

Count Klinkenstein had been dozing for an hour when he suddenly awoke with a start.

"Have I been asleep, Lolo?"

"Yes, Edward."

"I suppose it must be late," he replied, pulling out his watch and looking at it; it was eleven o'clock.

"I must be off, Lolo; a friend of mine is waiting for me at the Jockey Club." He jumped up from his seat with the intention of leaving.

"Edward, you are not going to leave me, are you?" She uttered this with a look of such pitiful surprise that he stopped short.

"I am afraid I must, Lolo."

But she would not hear of it, and clung to him, and told him that it was impossible for him to go; then she led him to the window, and drew his attention to the wretched weather outside, and to the dark and dismal street in which no cab was to be found; and she blessed the sleet and the rain that they came down so fast and mercilessly.

Then Count Klinkenstein thought to himself that after all it was hardly worth his while to leave, for he would have to walk to the club, and when he got there he would be too wet to go in, and even if he did he would probably find that Sydney Gray had already gone home. Moreover, could he not tell his friend the next morning just as well as to-night what

had passed between him and his mistress? Then it occurred to him that it would be more sensible to celebrate the end of his liaison with Olga Zanelli by one last night of love, rather than to bring it to a termination amidst recrimination, fault-finding, and reproaches. At least it would leave a pleasant souvenir for after life. Yes, he would stay; the last recollection he would bear away of Lolo would be one of ardent kisses, and not one of tears.

“As usual, Lolo, you will have your way,” he said to her; “I will stay with you to-night.”

So they went back and sat down again, and he began to fondle her and to caress her; and one might have taken them for lovers in the spring-time of their affections. When the clock of the neighbouring church struck midnight they retired to bed.

That night Count Klinkenstein slept but little. The idea that he was deceiving Lolo all the time, and that this was to be their last night together, made him feel unhappy. Was it not cruel on his part to keep her in the dark so long as to his real intentions? Would it not be better and more noble to let her know the truth at once, and to listen to her reproaches, which he felt he merited, rather than to steal her kisses under false pretences? Yet he felt he could not tell her that he was resolved to break with her; and he tossed about in bed, and was restless and irritated with himself, and unable to close his eyes.

When Count Klinkenstein saw the first signs of dawn he slipped gently out of bed, lest he should disturb Lolo, who was sleeping calmly, dreaming

probably of her ideal knight who was deserting her so basely. Then he took up his clothes and went on tiptoe into the adjoining room, and there began to pull them on feverishly, feeling nervous all the while lest the least noise should wake Lolo. In trying to buckle on his sword it slipped from his hands and fell on the ground, and for several minutes he remained standing motionless, afraid that she would have heard the noise and would come and ask him what he was doing. When he had recovered from his fright he finished dressing, and put on his officer's cap, and was ready to go. The bedroom door was ajar ; an uncontrollable desire to cast a last look at his sleeping mistress seized him ; he crept up to the door and looked in. Lolo was still asleep, with her head resting on one arm, and exposing her shoulders—shoulders he had so often kissed ! He heaved a sigh at the thought that he would probably never again see the woman with whom he had perhaps passed the best years of his life. He felt depressed and sick at heart.

“ I will write to her in a few days and tell her everything,” he said to himself, and then he turned and left.

In the passage he met a maid-servant. He was not in the humour to speak to any one ; at that moment he would have liked solitude, and to be left to his own thoughts. However, he had to say something to the servant or she would be astonished at his premature departure.

“ Tell your mistress, when she wakes, that I have to drill my troops early this morning, and that I could not get off that service.”

It was not true, but when one takes to deception does one care for truth?

With that last lie on his lips, feeling ashamed of himself, as well he might, for all that night he had told Lolo, in the midst of their kisses, that he loved her as much as ever, he stole like a thief down the creaky stairs, giving a shudder every time he heard his spurs clinking on the steps, fearing that Lolo might discover his departure, and rush from her bed after him, and throw her arms round his neck, and force him to come back to her.

He reached the door of the house, opened it, and as he closed it again gently he said to himself, not without feeling tears coming to his eyes: "It is all over between us!"

Then he walked home in a meditative mood.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

DURING the next few days Count Klinkenstein was in a great terror lest his mistress should turn up in his rooms to inquire what had become of him, and what was the reason of his keeping so long away from her. He felt that he must not see her any more, and that, therefore, the best thing for him to do would be to get out of Berlin for a short time, during which he might come to an arrangement with her by writing, and definitely settle what their future relations should be without the tears and reproaches which were certain to make personal interviews intolerable.

Christmas was close at hand, and at that season of the year every officer whose presence can be spared from his regiment receives permission to return to his home and family for a few days, so Count Klinkenstein went to his colonel, and after some grumbling on his part succeeded in obtaining a short leave of absence from him. Then he wrote to Olga Zanelli that the state of his affairs required his presence on his estates in Saxony, and that he would not be back till after the new year, and he sent her a Christmas present to console her for his absence.

To Sydney Gray's reproaches that he still kept his mistress deceived as to his real intentions towards

her, Count Klinkenstein replied: "My dear fellow, do not be too hard upon me; I am unfortunately not as cold-blooded as you are; on the contrary, I am of a very impressionable and emotional nature; you do not know how much I have loved this woman, and how difficult it is for me to tell her now that I must turn her adrift. The matter will be definitely settled in a few days; for goodness' sake let me have some peace and quiet till Christmas is over, and do not press me to spoil hers by unnecessarily telling her disagreeable things. She will learn her fate quite soon enough. When I return to Berlin with the new year we shall have parted for good, and I hope then to begin to lead a more respectable life."

"I hope you will," said Sydney Gray, shaking his head.

Count Klinkenstein sent a message to the Countess Nelly through his sister, wishing her a happy Christmas, and expressing a hope that he would soon see her again in Berlin. Having settled these affairs he took train for Dresden, and as it steamed out of the station he felt a sensation of relief that he had cut himself away from his every-day associates for a short time, so that in the quiet and solitude of the country he might be able to meditate over the resolution he had come to with regard to his mistress. It was the first time that he felt glad at leaving Berlin, and at the prospect of revisiting his Castle of Klinkenstein.

That night the young Count ate his solitary dinner in his ancestral home by the side of a great log fire, while his faithful servant Hans, who had attended on

him from the day of his birth, stood with stately dignity behind his chair to wait on him.

During the meal Count Klinkenstein addressed but few words to his servant ; he was thinking of all that had passed of late, and he felt a sensation of melancholy invading him, for certainly it was not gay to sit all alone in that large hall hung with dusty portraits of ancestors, trophies of arms which had grown rusty from want of care, and antlered heads of famous stags which had been shot in the neighbouring forest. Count Klinkenstein had not set foot in that hall since the day, now more than four years ago, when he had received the telegram from his uncle Count Eckstein informing him that he had obtained for him a commission as sub-lieutenant in the regiment of the Gardes du Corps. How many things had happened since then ! When he had started for Berlin he only knew of the vastness of the world and of the wickedness in it from what he had heard in sermons ; now he had learnt by experience most of its iniquities. He had left his home an innocent boy, he was returning now after a few years a man who had drunk deep from the cup of pleasure.

After dinner Count Klinkenstein took a light and roamed over the castle to revisit old haunts, and, not unmoved by the many recollections which it called up, stayed for some moments in the large room where he and his sister had so often played together when as children they had been brought from Dresden to spend the holidays with their old maiden aunt at Klinkenstein. The prim old lady with her simple faith and antiquated aristocratic ideals, whose ex-

periences of life had never extended beyond the city of Dresden and a few estates of the Saxon nobility, was now sleeping her last sleep in the family vault in the village church. That night full of youthful recollections Count Klinkenstein retired to rest, and laid himself down in the great state bed with the faded brocade hangings which no one but the head of the ancient and noble house of Klinkenstein had ever ventured to occupy.

The next morning the Count was up betimes, when he had to listen to a complimentary deputation from his villagers, who ended by practising a Christmas carol in the courtyard of the castle. After they had left the rector of the church presented himself, followed by most of the Count's tenants, and the reverend gentleman indulged in a pompous speech full of what he considered delicate little turns and phrases, and he praised the young Count because he possessed all the virtues of his ancestors, and he expressed the delight it gave him whenever his services were required either to baptise, welcome, marry, or bury, in that most stately of family vaults, any member of the noble house. The Count returned suitable replies, and called for ale, and, after having drunk repeated draughts of the national beverage to the health of their young master, the company retired.

Later in the day Herr Vogel, Count Klinkenstein's man of business, arrived, and put up at the castle for the Christmas holidays. The Count had telegraphed to him to come, for he wished to go through his accounts, and to see for himself how his affairs really

stood. It was the first time that he showed the slightest concern about them.

The mornings were now spent by Count Klinkenstein in wading through his accounts under the able direction of Herr Vogel, but in the afternoons he would take long solitary walks through the forest, and not return to the castle till it was dark. His feelings had greatly changed of late ; he felt that he was growing tired of a life of pleasure, and that amusements, however varied they may be, begin to pall on one if continually indulged in. He began to realise that life was after all not a path of roses, but rather one covered with thorns, and that it was perhaps more satisfactory to lead a quiet life in the society of a woman to whom one was married than to be continually knocking about with loose women and rowdy characters. He had had quite enough of what is generally known as fast living, suppers and late hours, and had listened endless times to the shouts of intoxicated but pretty women, and had laughed immoderately over their inane and intolerable jokes, and had danced impossible quadrilles with them in the midst of ruined furniture and broken bottles. Such things had charmed him when he first came to Berlin, for life was then to him a virgin soil, to be tested in every direction to see what it could yield ; but now he was tired of these eccentricities, and he meant to reform. He did not blame Lolo : he knew very well that she was pure-minded enough, and had always discouraged him from going to supper-parties which were apt to degenerate into orgies ; but still the women she saw, though in many cases

undoubtedly talented, were not such as would be received in good society ; her world was a Bohemian world, and he felt that it was time for him to cultivate the society of the women of his own position in life ; decent society might perhaps be duller than the one he had been of late accustomed to see, but he recognised that it was one where the ideals were nobler and more virtuous, and in this world virtue does not lure one with garlands of roses. There were moments, and those not so rare and far between, when the Count felt real longings after high aspirations ; but the society of a pretty mistress is not conducive to the continued maintenance of good resolutions.

Thus in his tramps through the snow the Count had many subjects to occupy his thoughts, and the long walks through the keen frosty air seemed to brace him up mentally as well as physically. When his stay at Klinkenstein approached its termination, the Count had thoroughly made up his mind that he would marry his cousin Nelly, however long he might have to wait for her, and however many obstacles might be put in his way by his irate uncle. Lolo, of course, must go. It was no doubt very sad, and melancholy, and pitiful, and all that sort of thing, but it could not be helped ; they had both acted very foolishly, and on impulse, and now they must both suffer for it ; he would provide for her liberally ; his sister would adopt the child, and then they would both go their way with a bundle of pleasant souvenirs, and begin life afresh and independently of each other.

Olga Zanelli's Christmas was not a happy one ; she spent it alone in her apartment with only the society

of her child. She had presentiments that things would not go well with her in the future, and she felt sad and dejected. As she sat pensive over the fire, with her child asleep in her lap, she had time to meditate over the vicissitudes of life : how suddenly changes come about ; how one moment we may be in flourishing circumstances and the next in misery. Then she thought of her last Christmas spent in Paris ; of their dinner at Bignon's on that day ; how loving the Count had been, how attentive to her, how nice in every way. Would she ever spend as pleasant a Christmas again ?

In the far corner of Pomerania, where Count Eckstein's country seat was situated, Christmas was being held in great style. At that festive season of the year it was the old General's custom to keep open house. In the daytime there were skating, sledging down hill slopes, and for those who cared shooting in the preserves ; in the evening the guests met round the large dinner-table in the hall, and when the meal was over came round games, theatricals, and not unfrequently an impromptu dance to the sound of a piano and a few violins played by some of the villagers.

The Countess Gisèle had gone on this occasion to spend Christmas with her uncle ; there were family matters she wanted to talk over with the old General, and she particularly wished to find out how far he was really opposed to his daughter marrying her brother, and she also wished to ascertain from Nelly herself whether she loved him, for she was determined to do all she could to bring about the match between them.

One morning, seeing her uncle taking a walk in his garden, she went up to him and began talking.

"I have been wanting for some time to talk to you about my brother's affairs."

"My dear Gisèle," replied the old General, taking her arm and leaning on it, "I am always ready to listen to anything you may have to say to me ; but I think I ought to let you know that when your brother was last here he behaved very rudely to me,—very rudely indeed,—and after that he ran away from my house without so much as saying good-bye or apologising for his conduct. I have a right to be very much irritated with him ; nevertheless, Gisèle, I am ready to listen to anything you may have to say to me on his behalf, and if you want any advice I will give it to you to the best of my ability."

"He is a very wild and foolish creature," she said, trying to apologise for her brother, "and I fully believe he left your house so abruptly because he felt too ashamed of himself to face you again so soon after his rude behaviour to you ; but you must be lenient towards him, my dear uncle ; he has been spoilt in Berlin and got his head turned, and then you know that his health of late has not been good ; he has grown very irritable, and says things without thinking of their consequences ; but I am sure he does not mean to do anyone any harm or to be intentionally rude to people."

"He is reckless, Gisèle, thoughtlessly reckless, and I am afraid that he will never learn to control himself until he has met with some misfortune which will have a sobering effect upon him."

"I do not want him to be cured by a catastrophe," she replied, eagerly ; "he has better qualities than you will allow. I know he really wishes to mend his ways ; but of course it is difficult to change one's mode of life all at once. What I want him to do is to get married—soon, very soon ; that will sober him quicker than anything."

"You are very sanguine, Gisèle ; personally I do not believe that a young fellow who has previously shown no desire to be steady will suddenly change after getting married. Has Edward told you that he wishes to marry Nelly ?"

"He told me that he had spoken to you about it, but that you had given him no encouragement. He was very much disappointed."

"I am sorry for him, Gisèle, but I could not do otherwise. I must look after Nelly's interests. A year ago I would have been very glad to have seen her married to him, but as I told him the other day things have changed since then. I have now heard of the life he has been leading for some time past, and you can therefore hardly expect me to be very eager to see my daughter married to him unless he exerts himself to convince me that he really wishes to reform. I did not tell him that he must give up all idea of marrying Nelly ; on the contrary, I told him that if he really loved her he could easily make the small sacrifices I asked of him. I insisted on his putting away at once the woman who has been his mistress for some years ; I do not know whether he has done it,—I believe not. After that I asked him to wait a year, during which period I would be able to judge

whether he was a man of any character and capable of putting a curb upon himself ; and I also wished to see whether after having lived like a spendthrift he was capable of turning over a new leaf and of leading the life of a sober and economical gentleman. These are not conditions which are very hard to fulfil. If at the end of the period of probation Nelly chooses to accept him, I shall not withhold my consent. Gisèle, the matter now rests with your brother ; I can do nothing more."

"But you hope that he will reform and be able to marry Nelly ?"

Count Eckstein looked at his niece and laughed. "I suppose, Gisèle, you would like to persuade me to give Nelly to your brother at once, but it cannot be. Patience is a good thing for young people ; waiting a little will do your brother no harm ; if he really loves her he will marry her in the end."

They had reached the house and there they parted ; but the Countess Gisèle had ascertained what she wanted, and that was that her uncle was not inexorably opposed to the match, and that with a little judicious persuasion at the right moment he might be induced to give his consent that the young people should at least be engaged, if not married, at a much earlier date than he had mentioned.

There was one other point she wished to ascertain before returning to Berlin, and that was whether Nelly really cared for her brother, and whether she was ready to accept him should he propose to her. She wished Nelly and her brother to settle the question between themselves, and only refer it to the old General

when they were fully determined to get married ; she very much doubted whether Count Eckstein would then be able to resist his daughter's appeal, for Nelly had more influence with him than anyone, and he was never known to refuse her anything. What the Countess Gisèle dreaded now above all things was some foolish act on her brother's part, such as his allowing himself to be persuaded to return to his mistress, which would rouse her uncle to such a pitch of anger that not even Nelly's soothing influence would be able to calm him. She was therefore very anxious to see her brother at least engaged to Nelly as soon as possible ; it would steady him and keep him out of mischief.

So one day, finding herself alone with Nelly, she asked her, after some preliminary fencing, whether she liked her brother.

The Countess Nelly ingenuously replied that she liked him very much, and that she regretted that she saw so little of him.

"Would you like to see him down here ?" asked the Countess Gisèle.

"Yes," replied Nelly, "but there is little chance of it ; my father seems unfortunately to have taken a dislike to him, so I do not suppose we shall see him down here again. I do not know exactly what took place when he was last here, but Edward left in a very great hurry, and so I do not expect to see him again till we get to Berlin for the court balls."

"I suppose Edward made love to you too openly, Nelly, when he was down here, and your father probably lectured him rather severely on his conduct."

“ My father never gave him the time to make love to me ; he turned him out of the house at once ; ” and then the Countess Nelly burst into tears at the thought of all she had lost through her father’s unnatural conduct. Then the Countess Gisèle knew what she wanted, and consoled her pretty cousin, and assured her that all would be right in the end.

Directly after the new year Count Klinkenstein returned to Berlin, but, afraid that Olga Zanelli might inconveniently turn up in his rooms, he went to an hotel ; there at least he was safe from a sudden inrush of an infuriated mistress. From Klinkenstein he had written to Lolo to tell her that he would have to stay longer in the country than he had expected ; after he had been back a week in Berlin he wrote to her that his family were bringing great pressure to bear upon him to make him give her up ; that he had pretended to comply with their wishes, and that it was therefore better for them not to see each other for the moment ; that the storm would soon blow over, and then he would hasten back to her, and he begged her to be reasonable and to have a little patience. He ended his letter to her with many loving phrases. He thought he was showing great tact in acting as he did, and in not hurrying matters too quickly, and whenever he felt a little uneasy as to his conduct towards her he would suppress such feelings by saying to himself that after all all sensible people were agreed that he ought to get rid of his mistress ; if he told her things in his letters which were not true, it was done to avoid giving her pain ; it was no use hastening the *dénouement* and prematurely breaking to her the disagreeable fact that

he was going to abandon her ; she would learn the worst quite soon enough. So he felt fairly pleased with himself and in high spirits.

In due course of time the Countess Gisèle returned to Berlin. She sent for her brother and asked him if he had finally broken with his mistress. Count Klinkenstein did not think it convenient to let his sister know the whole truth, so he replied that that matter was practically settled, with the exception of a few questions of detail. On learning this, the Countess Gisèle told her brother that Nelly loved him, and that he must propose to her at the very first opportunity, and that she undertook once he was accepted to get Count Eckstein to give his consent to the match. Count Klinkenstein expressed himself delighted at the news, and promised to do everything his sister asked of him. That night he went home and began composing what was to be his ultimatum to Olga Zanelli.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE month of January was nearly over, and Count Klinkenstein was still living in an hotel, and hardly ever visited his rooms, from fear that he might be caught there by Olga Zanelli. He rarely went out walking, preferring to drive in a closed cab if he had to go anywhere, for he dreaded the possibility of running up against his mistress in the street,—verbal explanations would be so intensely disagreeable. To Lolo's long and numerous letters he sometimes felt himself bound to reply; then he would pen together a few words telling her that his love for her was the same as of old, but that his family were so incensed at discovering to what an extent he was bound to her that he must in future be very circumspect and wary in his conduct; and then he always promised to come and see her again as soon as ever it was possible, and he usually ended with an exhortation to patience. This sort of thing, however, could not go on for ever, and he always felt irritated and angry with himself every time he wrote a letter full of deceptive promises to the woman he had loved so much.

Count Eckstein and the Countess Nelly had arrived in Berlin for the winter. The great yearly ceremony of the "Schleppenkur," or presentation day at Court, had taken place, and the first of the Court balls

was to be given in a few days. Count Klinkenstein had called upon his uncle at a time when he knew he was out, and he had done his duty in leaving a card, and one day he had met his cousin Nelly at his sister's, and having been greeted by her with great warmth, he returned home fully determined that she should become his wife. She was too pretty to be allowed to escape, and then had she not another advantage, that of possessing a large fortune? It was also very flattering to know that she loved him, at least his sister told him so, and he could not doubt her word. He made up his mind to propose to her at the Court ball, which was to take place in a few days.

On reaching his hotel he called for ink and paper, and sat down with renewed zeal to draft a letter to Olga Zanelli, telling her that circumstances compelled him to separate from her definitely. After several hours' work he still felt dissatisfied with what he had written; he thought the wording of the letter too harsh and cruel, so finally he threw the draft into the fire, saying to himself, "I shall wait till to-morrow; I am tired now, in the morning I shall have fresher ideas." Then he went to dine at the Jockey Club, and ended the evening with playing at *écarté* for small sums, and retired to bed early, for he was really trying to lead a very quiet life since he had returned from Klinkenstein.

During the next few days Count Klinkenstein was engaged in the arduous and painful task of composing the important letter, which he thought would free him for ever from his mistress, and every day his exertions were crowned with the same result—that his draft

letter was thrown into the fire as unsatisfactory. He would mutter to himself, "A letter of this importance must be well composed; I have got time, there are still so many days to the Court ball at which I have to propose to Nelly." Then he would go as usual and dine at the club, and play his little game of *écarté* before going to bed.

On the eve of the day on which the first Court ball of the season was to be given the letter to Olga Zanelli was still unwritten. Late that afternoon Count Klinkenstein returned to his hotel, determined not to leave it again until the letter was finished. He ordered a simple dinner, and had it sent up to his rooms; then he locked himself up and began to work. He shed many tears as he pored over the paper, and more than once he jumped up from his seat crying aloud that he could not write the letter to Lolo, and that it was impossible for him to break with her for good; he must go and see her now and again; he must occasionally hear her voice. Then his paroxysm of remorse would pass and he would sit down calmer, and begin to write again. So the night went by, and, when the dawn began to break, feeling tired and feverish, he began to copy out the letter which he had finally decided to send to his mistress. It was not as well written as he would have liked, but he was too enervated to begin his task over again. The letter was as follows:—

"MY DARLING LOLO,—How often in the days of our joy have I not called you by that name? days that we thought must last for ever, but which, alas! fate

has decreed must be otherwise. Lolo, be strong to bear the news which, with bitter remorse and regret, I see myself compelled to write to you. Lolo, my darling, we must part—part not for days, or months, or years, but part, Lolo, for ever and ever. I must marry. Do not think I have come to this decision hastily ; I have gone through an inward struggle of which you know nothing, which I carefully hid from you, because I thought that I would still be able to find the means of returning to you and of living with you for life. Much as I would have wished it, Lolo, it cannot be. My fortune is almost gone ; my family have forced me to marry, and I do not know how I can resist. When we are very young, Lolo, we think we can do as we please, that we can be free, and that we can emancipate ourselves from all restraint ; but man is a weak creature, Lolo, and he is the slave of circumstance. The bonds of social customs, habits, and traditions weigh heavy on us ; we sometimes think that we can oppose them, but in the end they triumph. They are too strong to be resisted, and, therefore, it is perhaps better to submit to them without a murmur.

“We were young, Lolo, and inexperienced, and we have committed a great folly. It almost seems in this world as if great joy were but the precursor of great sorrow. In the heat of my youthful passion I have done you a great wrong. I do not wish to excuse my guilt, I only beg that you may pardon me for what I now see myself compelled to do. Do not imagine that I suffer no anguish at separating from you. Lolo, you take away with you my youth, and

I begin to feel like one who has turned his back upon the best of life. All my illusions,—all my early dreams of love,—are gone. They are linked with your name,—they cling to your kisses,—they will be buried with you. Lolo, I marry because my family wish it ; because I believe it is my duty to do so ; because after much hesitation I have come to the conclusion that it is best for us both that we should see no more of each other.

“If I only consulted my inclinations, Lolo, I would go back to you ; but what good would come of it? We can never be married ; you know the social laws of our country, how strict they are. Therefore, to the end of our lives we would have to continue to live apart, although we were bound to each other. Is it a prospect, Lolo, which can be looked forward to with pleasure? I fear not. While we are still young we do not think about it, but the time will come when a separate existence will become irksome to us, and when we shall sigh to be more closely united. Then will arise difficulties and tears which it would be as well to avoid. So, Lolo, we must part. It is sad to have to write that word, but I feel that it must be done.

“Darling Lolo, you are still young and beautiful, and full of those attractions which win the love of men. My one prayer now is that you may marry someone with whom you may travel down the path of life more happily than you would have done had you continued with me. I give you back your freedom and independence ; my fortune has been much impaired, but the half of what remains of it is at your

service. It will be enough to secure you that independence which will enable you to choose as a partner for life a man whom you may feel that you can love. My agent will call on you to settle all details with regard to money matters.

“Lolo, there yet remains the child. What will become of her? Lolo, I would ask you to make one more sacrifice; let my sister adopt her. I know how difficult it will be for you to separate yourself from her, but think of the child’s future; think of her true interests, and of what will be best for her when she is grown up. You need not part with her at once; she is still very young; there is time. In a few months or a year you may feel stronger and view things more calmly; nor do I expect of you that you should give her up absolutely and entirely, and never see her again; no, my sister is willing that you should occasionally see your child; but those are questions which may be settled later. Lolo, if you can make this sacrifice, I implore you to do it.

“There is one more request I would ask of you, my darling; do not try and see me. My resolution is irrevocable; I cannot change it. It is painful enough to have to endure the sorrow of separating from you in silence; let me not see you weeping, Lolo; I could not bear to see you suffer pain which I could not soothe, or shedding tears which I knew I could not dry. For God’s sake, Lolo, spare me that.

“I must close this long letter. The pain I have suffered in having to write its contents to you, Lolo, you will never know. I feel as if I were closing the book of my youth; the past seems a dream of

beauty ; I look forward to the future with dread and apprehension. Lolo, I sincerely hope that you may bear this news with fortitude and calmness ; forgive me for the cruel pain which I am causing you, and pity me, for you know not what I suffer. So, darling, farewell ; yet I hope not for ever, but until the years have passed over us, and made us look upon the world more soberly and more calmly. Perhaps then we may meet again some day as friends, and be able to talk over the joys we have known, and which will then appear to us like a far-distant dream and an unreal thing. Lolo, if I felt strong enough I would like to hold you once more in my arms and to give you a last kiss ;—but it cannot be. So, my darling, farewell, and believe me I will always pray for your happiness ; and let me hope that you will sometimes think kindly of one who, though he may seem cruel to you at present, yet has loved you and ever must love you truly.

“KLINKENSTEIN.”

When the Count had finished copying out the letter from the draft he read it over once more to see that it was all right ; then he folded it and put it into an envelope and sealed it down. When his task was done he gave a sigh of relief, and looking at his watch he saw that it was nearly six in the morning. He rose from his seat and took a candle off the table, then, as he passed to his bed-room, he stopped for a moment to look out of the window. It was snowing slightly, and above the housetops the red glow of a wintry sunrise was just beginning to make itself visible. The Count

remained standing candle in hand and thinking of the many sunrises he had seen after supper-parties at which Lolo had been his companion. Such souvenirs are generally pleasant enough, but at that moment Count Klinkenstein felt sick at heart and weary of everything. He thought of wasted opportunities, of money recklessly spent, of all the harm he had done Olga Zanelli through heedlessness and through abandoning himself to his passions. He made up his mind then and there to atone for all he had done, and took a solemn vow to himself that henceforth he would try and lead a better life; and that if he married his cousin Nelly, though he might not love her with the same ardent passion with which he had loved his mistress, still he would strive to love her truly and honourably, and to be faithful to her. Thus, full of good resolutions, he went to bed.

When he rose it was near midday. After having dressed and breakfasted, he gave the letter he had written to be posted to Olga Zanelli. Then he took a walk, during which he occupied himself in planning out what he should tell his cousin Nelly that evening; and having arranged a conversation to his satisfaction, which was to lead up to his proposing to her, he went to the Jockey Club and dined early. After that he went back to his hotel and put on his scarlet Court uniform, and having bestowed considerable care over his toilet he drove to the palace. Court balls in Berlin begin at a very early hour, and guests are expected to be punctual, but on this occasion Count Klinkenstein arrived almost before anyone. He had partaken of a good deal of champagne at dinner, and

he felt in good humour with himself and the world in general.

The rooms in the palace in which the court balls are given are famous for their magnificence. At the top of the great staircase, known by the name of the "Wendeltreppe," stood Count Klinkenstein watching the arrival of the guests, and anxiously leaning over the balustrade so as not to miss the approach of his cousin Nelly. He was beginning to get impatient; was she going to fall unwell and not come after all? The guests were arriving in one continuous flow, for it was to be a great ball that night, and as many as fifteen hundred invitations, it was said, had been launched. The variety of the uniforms of the men and the rich trains of the ladies' dresses trailing on the steps gave the staircase a brilliant appearance when seen from above, but Count Klinkenstein's thoughts were otherwise engaged than in admiring the beauty of the spectacle before him. The ambassadors had all arrived, and the detachment of foot guards, wearing on this occasion the sugar-loaf helmets which date from the time of Frederick the Great, had presented arms to each of them, and as they disappeared in the saloons Count Klinkenstein's nerves had been irritated by the roll of the muskets as they were again allowed to drop on the marble floor. At last the young Count, after having been kept waiting a long time, caught sight of Count Eckstein and his daughter at the foot of the staircase. She was beautifully dressed; a brilliant jewel shone in her hair, and she was wearing the famous diamond necklace which had belonged to her mother. For a few moments Count

Klinkenstein stood overcome with admiration, and in his heart he pardoned her for having kept him waiting so long if she had spent that time in making herself so beautiful for his sake ; then he hurried down the winding staircase to meet her, quite oblivious of the quarrel he had had with his uncle, and of the fact that they had not met since. As soon as he found himself face to face with his uncle he saluted him, after which he began to feel foolish and uncomfortable, and mumbled some inquiries after his health ; but the old General, who was of a kindly nature, seeing the confusion of his nephew gave him a friendly greeting, and Count Klinkenstein, having somewhat recovered his presence of mind, offered the Countess Nelly his arm, and led her through the interminable suite of saloons, at every door of which stood two stalwart soldiers of the Gardes du Corps with drawn swords, and wearing the helmets crowned with the silver eagle with wings outstretched. Proud of his charge, seized by a sensation of delightful intoxication, fully conscious that all eyes were turned upon him, and resolved in his mind that the Countess Nelly would be engaged to be married to him before the night was out, the Count led his fair cousin through the long picture gallery, which was crowded with officers, and through which the chamberlains with difficulty kept a lane open for the ladies to pass, and so reached the famous White Hall, in which the dancing was to take place.

Count Klinkenstein would have liked to have taken the Countess Nelly into a quiet corner of the room, and there to begin pouring into her ear all that he

wished to say to her that night, but it was impossible to do so ; there were too many people around.

“Keep as many dances as you can for me,” he whispered to her ; “I have so many things to tell you to-night.”

“I will, Edward,” she replied.

The Countess Nelly was undoubtedly the prettiest girl in the room, and as was natural one officer after another came up to her to ask for the favour of a dance during the course of the evening. She promised to satisfy as many as she could, but she took care to reserve a good many dances for her cousin.

Presently the hubbub in the hall diminished ; chamberlains began hurrying about requesting people to move to their proper places, the Diplomatic Corps to the left, the princes and princesses to the right of the throne, the ladies opposite, and the other guests as many as could find room at the lower end of the hall. The Emperor was approaching. First came a number of pages in picturesque uniforms marching two and two ; they took up a position along the wall behind the throne ; then followed the Master of the Ceremonies, the Marshals of the Court, a host of Chamberlains holding their wands of office, and the great dignitaries of state, most of whom wore the yellow riband of the Order of the Black Eagle. A dead silence followed ; all eyes were turned in one direction, and the profound salutations which followed announced that the aged Emperor had entered the hall. His Majesty was wearing the scarlet court uniform of the Gardes du Corps, on which shone a galaxy of decorations ; he came along erect but with slow steps, and

gave his arm to the crown princess ; as he passed along he acknowledged in a kindly manner the salutations which were made to him on either side. Behind the Emperor towered the stately figure of the crown prince, on whose arm leant a royal princess, and then in due order of precedence followed the other members of the Imperial House. As soon as they had taken their proper seats on either side of the Emperor, the signal was given for the band to play and the dancing began.

An hour or so later Count Klinkenstein and the Countess Nelly were seated on a sofa in a corner of the great gallery which overlooks the White Hall. Now and again a few persons would climb up there to have a look at the crowd of dancers from above, and having satisfied their curiosity they would retire, troubling themselves very little about the two young persons who were seated on the sofa in the corner.

"I am so glad to be again alone with you, Nelly, and to be able to speak to you freely," said Count Klinkenstein to his cousin. "It seems such a long time since we were skating together in Pomerania. I would have liked to have stayed so much longer with you, if it had not been for that unfortunate row I had with your father. Do you think he has forgiven me yet?"

"I am sure he does not bear you any grudge, Edward, but it would be nice of you to make your peace with him. You see, you might then come and visit us."

"I would do anything for your sake, Nelly. Did I hear you say that you would like me to visit you often?"

"Of course, Edward; it is very wicked of you that you have never set foot in our house since we came to Berlin."

"I was afraid, Nelly, to see the door shut in my face; and besides, I did not know that any of your family cared to see me."

"Why do you say so, Edward?"

"Because I begin to think that I am a good-for-nothing person, at least every one seems to find fault with what I do, and thinks it his duty to lecture me on my conduct."

"They mean well, Edward; it shows that they take an interest in you, otherwise they would not give themselves the trouble to give you good advice. I always take your part whenever my father says anything severe about you."

"It is very kind of you, Nelly," said Count Klinckenstein, toying with his cousin's fan; then he added, with a sigh, "You and my sister seem to be the only true friends I have."

"Why do you talk in that depressed way, Edward? Are you unhappy? I am sure you have a great many friends."

"No real ones, Nelly; I have any number of acquaintances, and I do not deserve anything else."

"But why, Edward?"

"Because ever since I have been in Berlin I have behaved foolishly. Everything seems to go wrong with me."

"Is it true, Edward, as my father says, that you have run through a great deal of money?"

"I am afraid, Nelly, that it is only too true. I was

very young and ignorant of the world when I came to Berlin, and I have been, consequently, very reckless in my expenditure. Experience, Nelly, has to be bought dearly. I have gone through a great deal, and I only hope that it has taught me to be a little wiser in future. One gets tired of a life of amusement ; my present wish is to settle down and to lead henceforth a quiet and sensible life."

"Edward, all men must be young once and a little wild, at least so I have heard people say, but I do not suppose you have been worse than other young men. Why do you therefore talk as if you were already old and *blasé* with everything ?"

"I am not *blasé*, Nelly, but I am dissatisfied with myself. I begin to feel that perhaps the best thing for me to do is to marry and settle down. It is not a good thing to live alone, it sours one's temper and makes one see the world in black colours. I feel I would be so much happier if I had a companion always with me, and that companion a young and pretty girl."

"Edward, you are really thinking of getting married ?" inquired the young Countess, looking anxiously at her cousin.

"Yes, Nelly ; and my only difficulty is to find some one who would take sufficient interest in me to join her fortunes to mine."

"You must know so many girls, Edward ; do you not think that out of the number some must care for you ?"

"I have no belief in my power of pleasing women, Nelly ; I am too wild and thoughtless ; I do not think I know how to make love to a woman, and yet I feel

there is one I could love so much if she only cared for me."

They remained silent for a time, during which the Countess drew out of Count Klinkenstein's hands the fan he had been playing with, and opening it covered her face with it, so as to hide her agitation.

"So, Edward, you have resolved to get married?" she said slowly, as if it caused her pain to ask the question.

"Yes, Nelly," he replied, "I have made up my mind to try and get married, but in this world we do not always succeed in doing things which we wish to do."

"Do you really love a girl, Edward?"

"Yes, Nelly, there is a person I love very much, and my anxiety now is to know whether that person cares for me."

The Countess Nelly turned away from her cousin, for she did not wish him to see the agitation into which she had been put by his last reply. Leaning her elbow on the marble balustrade of the gallery, she leant over, pretending to watch the dancers below. At that moment the orchestra was playing the valse from the kermess in *Faust* during which Margaret sees for the first time the lover who is to ruin her life. Many thoughts passed through the young Countess's mind as she sat silent listening to Gounod's music, and watching the men and women below waltzing madly just as in the kermess in *Faust*. Was she, like Margaret, going to find her lover at a dance? In her quiet undemonstrative manner she had loved her cousin for some time already; she had probably but vague ideas as to what love meant, but she felt

attracted towards him ; she knew that he was said to be thoughtless and reckless, and that many people were disposed to say nasty things about him, but she did not mind them ; she believed in her cousin ; in his serious moments he had always seemed to her so kind and gentle. What agitated Countess Nelly at that moment was the fear that her cousin loved another woman and not herself, and that he was confiding his love to her as to a friend, and but to elicit sympathy.

“She loves me,” said Count Klinkenstein to himself, as he noticed the emotion his last words had produced in her. “She loves me, and my sister was right ; I will make certain of it at once.”

He took her hand, and he felt it tremble as he touched it ; she did not turn, but continued with a dreamy look gazing into space, listening to the music and the rhythmic beat of the feet of the dancers on the parquet floor of the hall.

“Nelly,” he whispered to her, “do you remember the red rose you gave me when we parted in the country ? I have kept it by me ever since. It has caused me to ponder over many things which never troubled my mind before, and it has opened my mind to the folly of my previous life. I do not wish to make myself out better than I am, or to hide how bad my conduct has hitherto been ; but I want to mend, Nelly, and it would be so pleasant to feel that one owed one’s reform to the presence and influence of a woman. Do you think that you can love, Nelly ? If you could say you could you would make me so happy.”

“It is with me that he is in love,” said the Countess

Nelly to herself; and she felt as if she could have thrown her arms round his neck and kissed him for it. She had waited long for this declaration, and she had often feared that he did not care for her. She had not forgotten that dull Christmas she had had to spend at the Castle of Klinkenstein, to which she had gone hoping to see a great deal of him, and after all he never came, for all the while he was amusing himself in Paris with Olga Zanelli, although she had never been able to discover the reason of his absence, and only suspected that some woman was the cause of it.

As she answered nothing, Count Klinkenstein plucked up courage and continued his suit.

“Nelly, I know that I am not very eloquent or persuasive, yet believe me I am sincere when I say that if you will become my wife all my efforts will be directed towards making you happy. If you reject me I do not know what I shall do. I have been very unhappy of late, Nelly; with you I think I could find rest and quiet. Nelly, if you would become my wife we would retire together to Klinkenstein, and your presence there would make that dull castle seem quite gay to me. Nelly, if you only love me a little do not reject my suit absolutely; give me time to try and persuade you to become my wife. Nelly, you do not know what I have gone through of late;—say that you can love me; say so, Nelly—it may save me.”

With a look of radiant joy in her face she turned round and said to him, “Edward, I do. I have loved you for a long time, and you have never seen it.”

The gallery where they were sitting was at that

moment empty ; Count Klinkenstein, grown bold and intoxicated with joy at the words his cousin had spoken, passed his arms round her waist, and drawing her close to himself kissed her ; and there for several minutes they sat silent, looking into each other's eyes, she trembling at the strange and mysterious sensation of feeling herself face to face with the man she loved, while he thought himself in a dream, and that a wild orgy of undefined souvenirs of bygone joys were passing in a strange medley before his memory.

"We have been too long alone, Edward ; people will notice our absence ; let us return to the ball-room."

"Yes," he replied, giving her his arm ; and as they descended together the marble staircase which led below, he held his head erect and made his spurs ring on the marble steps, for he was proud and overcome with joy at having won the love of the prettiest girl at that moment in Berlin society. Had he not been restrained by the presence of royalty, he would have expressed his joy by dancing a breakdown in the middle of the White Hall.

"Do not tell any one about this, Edward, until I have got my father's consent, which I am certain to get before long, for he never refuses me anything."

"Very well, Nelly, I will only tell your brother and my sister; there can be no-harm in that."

"I have been looking for you everywhere," said an officer coming up ; "you know you promised me this dance."

The Countess Nelly parted from her cousin for the moment, and went off to dance with a light heart and feeling very happy.

The supper had been partaken of and the cotillon danced, and the ball was now over. With the same ceremonial as on arriving, the Emperor, the royal princes and princesses, the great dignitaries of state, the chamberlains and the pages, retired, passing slowly through the long picture-gallery, crowded with people. When the procession had passed, the royal servants brought in a number of silver trays covered with little glass cups filled with a famous hot punch, brewed from a recipe of the time of Frederick William III., and which was intended to brace up the tired guests and enable them to face the cold outside.

The Countess Nelly, wrapped in her furs, gave her arm to her cousin, who led her down the great staircase of the Palace, while old Count Eckstein followed, grumbling at the late hour to which these court balls were now spun out. When the carriage drove up, Count Klinkenstein took leave of his future wife, and then, arm in arm with her brother, who had but lately joined a regiment of the Guards, and followed by some brother officers, he crossed the square in front of the Palace, intending to go home on foot.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

AS already said, Olga Zanelli had spent a sad Christmas. She did not wish to be happy while Count Klinkenstein was away ; she had always seen so much of him that she felt the separation keenly. During his absence she remained at home a great deal, and avoided seeing the many friends and acquaintances she had made in happier days. In the evening she would sit down at her table and write long letters to her lover, telling him all she had done that day, and all the thoughts which had passed through her mind. "I shall be happier with the new year," she would say to herself, as she finished her task, and then she would go to bed and try and dream herself by his side.

Thus Christmas passed and the new year came in, and still Count Klinkenstein stayed away. One day a letter came from him saying that his family were making a great disturbance about his continued liaison with her, and the reckless way in which he had been spending his money, and that they threatened to take the management of his estates out of his hands, and that it was therefore better for them both to keep very quiet, and to abstain from seeing each other for the moment.

That day Lolo cried a good deal, and wrote a pathetic letter to Count Klinkenstein, in which she gave vent

to her undying love for him, and assured him that she was ready to make any sacrifices that were for his good, but she hoped he would have some pity on her, and not stay away too long from her side. She was too young, she wrote to him, to feed as yet on souvenirs ; she felt she must occasionally see him, if only for a moment, else she would die.

So the days went by, and the middle of January was reached. It was a very cold winter that year, and one day the child came home from a drive with her nurse feeling very unwell. Lolo put her child to bed, and nursed her and watched by her side through the night. In the morning, as the little girl was no better, a doctor was summoned in all haste, for Lolo was getting anxious. When he arrived he looked grave and shook his head. The child had caught a chill, and an inflammation of the lungs had set in. He prescribed some medicine and advised careful nursing, as the child seemed delicate. Lolo hardly required that recommendation ; she passed her days and her nights by the child's bedside, and herself hardly took any rest. Night and morning she wrote to Count Klinkenstein, telling him of her child's illness, and begging him to come and console her in her affliction.

Of late Count Klinkenstein had given orders to the servant whom he had left in charge of his lodgings not to send any more of Olga Zanelli's letters to his hotel. He did not wish to see them ; her appeals to him to return were becoming too pressing and too touching ; he was aware of his weakness ; he was afraid to yield ; if he went and saw her again he knew that he could not answer for the consequences, and it would be very

probable that his marriage with Nelly would never come off. He had therefore taken a heroic resolution ; he would not read any further communications from his mistress ; thus it was Count Klinkenstein never heard of the illness of his child.

The child grew rapidly worse. She had been ill already for several days, and she was becoming visibly weaker. The crisis was at hand, and that night Lolo gave herself no rest, but watched over her child, whose breathing was becoming painful and difficult. The morning broke and the doctor came early. He gave some directions to alleviate the child's sufferings, but could hold out little hope of saving her life. Then he left, promising to return in a few hours.

"Why does Edward keep away?" thought Lolo to herself during the next few hours of suspense ; "does he not love his child? He always said he did, and I will believe him ; he must have got my letters, why then does he not come? Perhaps he thinks I am needlessly alarmed, and that the child is not as seriously ill as I have made out." Then she would buoy up her spirits with the hope that he would arrive every minute.

The doctor returned about the middle of the day. Lolo thought him cruel for having stayed away so long. He examined the child carefully, and then turning to Lolo, who was anxiously awaiting his decision, he told her that he had done all he could for the little girl, and that she was not likely to live more than a few hours. Then he left to attend to other patients.

Lolo could hardly believe what she had heard. It

had never occurred to her that her child would really die. She was too dazed to cry. She lifted the child out of the bed and laid her on her lap as she sat by the fire. She wished to have the little girl as near her as possible during the last hours of her life. She thought of many things as she watched her child's life ebbing away. Why was she born at all if she was to die so young? Life seemed a strange riddle to her at that moment. So the hours passed, and as the evening crept in the child expired gently in Lolo's arms. Then she rose and went into her room in search of solitude, and there she gave relief to her grief in floods of tears, and she felt at that moment as if she would like to die and to follow her child into the great unknown.

Her maid entered her room and brought her a letter. It was the one which Count Klinkenstein had written to tell her that they must separate for ever. When she saw the well-known handwriting she wiped her tears. "He has written to me at last!" she exclaimed; "he has written to console me;" and she tore open the envelope feverishly.

She read it through twice, then she dropped it on the floor and gave a great cry of anguish.

"He is going to marry! to marry and abandon me now that I am in distress! O my God! it cannot be true. It is not Edward who has written this letter; it is his family who have compelled him to do it. He has allowed himself to be influenced by them; he does not know what he is doing. He loves me still—I am sure he does, and yet he offers me money instead of love, and asks me to give up the child!

Yes, the child is given up, but not the way he means. To lose my child and his love at once is too much to bear."

Then she went off into hysterics, and her maid brought her salts and tried to console her for the loss of her child.

When the fit was over Lolo grew very calm, though she was pale, like a person who has passed through a severe illness. Her maid advised her to eat something, but Lolo replied, "I have no time to think about eating; bring me my furs, for I must go out." To herself she added, "I will see him, and if he does not love me any more I will kill myself."

The maid went and did as she was told, and after having helped her mistress to put on her furs she offered to accompany her, but Lolo declined the offer, saying, "What I have to do I must do alone."

Then Olga Zanelli left her home and went out into the night.

That morning Heinrich Lazarus had been released from prison, having served out his sentence of six months' imprisonment for having belonged to a secret and illegal society whose object was to create disturbances. During his long incarceration he had had plenty of time to meditate over his conduct and to change his views of life. Slowly he began to realise that youthful enthusiasm is not sufficient to reform the world, but that what is necessary is long and steady work, all tending towards a clear and definite aim, and that real progress can only be obtained step by step. Bernard Adler's treachery had been a great blow to him, for he had always held such an exalted

idea of the sacredness of friendship, and especially of those friendships formed in youth. Many a night in his solitary cell he had wept over the illusions which had buoyed him up in his poverty, but which were now vanishing so fast.

On leaving the prison Heinrich Lazarus had been handed a letter from the painter Ludwig Krause, informing him that he was getting on very well, and inviting him to come and stay with him in Rome as soon as he was released, and sending some money to enable him to do so. It was a consolation to Heinrich to know at that moment that at least if one of his friendships had proved false the other was doubly true. His spirits were low; he felt he wanted a change, so he was glad of an opportunity to turn his back upon the dreary city of Berlin, and he hoped that he would find consolation basking in the sun and contemplating nature among the orange trees and myrtles of the south. Before going, however, he had a duty to perform; he had to thank Olga Zanelli, the woman he loved, for all her kindness to him in his adversity, for the interest she had shown in him during his long trial, and for the noble way in which she had come forward with money to enable him and his companions in misfortune to make a good defence.

As soon as he was released he hurried to what had been Olga Zanelli's house, but he found it now tenanted by strangers. What had happened to her? The servant who opened the door did not know. Had she quarrelled with Count Klinckenstein? had she separated from him? was she free? Was there a possibility of her marrying him if he was able to

earn a livelihood and to enter some profession? That was the question which agitated Heinrich all that day as he hunted to find her address. Towards evening he obtained the necessary information, and immediately hurried to find her. As he reached the third floor of the unpretentious house in which Olga Zanelli now lived, he said to himself, "She has broken with Count Klinkenstein; she is poor; she is therefore nearer to me. Is she only free?"

Timidly he knocked at the door; it was opened by a maid-servant, who asked him what he wanted. He inquired if Olga Zanelli was at home. The maid replied that her mistress was just gone out, and he, too timid to put any further questions, replied that he would call again, and then departed.

When Olga Zanelli left her home it was dark, and the gas lamps in the streets were already lit. She hurried on foot to Count Klinkenstein's rooms, threading her eager way through the crowded streets, looking neither to the right nor to the left, minding no one, hearing and seeing nothing. She reached the door of his house; she quickly mounted the stairs which she knew so well,—stairs which with a beating heart she had mounted for the first time more than three years ago, on the night that Count Klinkenstein found her in the Thiergarten and brought her home.

She rang the bell hysterically. The door was soon opened, but not by the old servant Hans whom she knew so well. She tried to rush into the apartment, but the servant seized her arm and held her back, and asked her what she wanted.

“ I must see Count Klinkenstein ; do you understand me ? ” she exclaimed ; “ I must see him at once ! ”

“ You cannot come in,” replied the servant ; “ he is not at home.”

“ He is at home, but you will not let me see him. I must come in ; do you hear me ? I must see him. His child is dead,—he does not know it. Tell him his child is dead ! ”

“ Count Klinkenstein is not here,” answered the servant, drily, feeling annoyed at having to deal with an apparently hysterical woman ; “ he has not been here for a long time, and I have strict orders to let nobody in.” Having delivered himself of this, he shut the door in Olga Zanelli’s face.

“ Where is he then if he is not here ? ” she shouted ; “ he is in ; he hears my voice and yet he will not come out and speak to me.” Then she grasped the bell handle and pulled it violently, till the servant came out again and told her to keep quiet and to go away.

“ I will not keep quiet ; I will shout till he hears me ! ”

“ It is no use shouting,” replied the servant ; “ I have already told you that he is not here ; he has not been here for weeks, and so if you will not keep quiet and go away I will send for the police and have you removed.”

“ What has become of him if he is not living here, and where shall I find him ? ”

“ It is not my business to give you information, but I have no doubt that you could find him to-night at the court ball, only there is no chance of your being

let in." Having said this the servant closed the door again.

"Edward gone to the court ball, to dance no doubt with the girl he is to marry ! Of all men, he dancing when his child is just dead !"

It was too much for Olga Zanelli ; she reeled, and clutched the banister to save herself. When she had somewhat recovered from the stupor into which this last piece of news had thrown her, she hurried away to try and save him from what she considered the sacrilege of dancing when he had just lost his child.

"I will go to the Palace," she cried ; "I will force my way in ; I will see him and tell him everything ! He cannot leave me now the child is dead ; he has allowed himself to be influenced by his family ; he is no longer himself ; he does not know what he is doing."

She re-descended the staircase ; she entered the street and hurried along the Unter den Linden, which was crowded with people watching the carriages and the gilt coaches of the princes and the ambassadors driving to the Palace. She reached the bridge and crossed the river ; a large force of police on foot and on horseback was drawn up here to direct the traffic. She slipped through them unperceived, and entered the precincts of the Palace. She crossed the courtyard and reached the bottom of the great staircase ; here she was stopped and asked by a policeman what she wanted.

She replied in hysterical shrieks, "Count Klinkenstein is inside ; he is my lover, and he is going to marry some one else. Do you hear me ? he is going to

marry, and his child is dead and he does not know it. Let me pass—I must see him—I must speak to him !”

A carriage drove up at that moment, and Count Eckstein and his daughter got out of it. The Countess Nelly heard Olga Zanelli's shrieks, and inquired of the inspector on duty what was the matter with the woman. He replied that she was merely hysterical ; and then the young Countess entered the Palace to dance with her cousin.

Several policemen had hurried up on hearing the disturbance created by Olga Zanelli, and the inspector then told her that if she created any more noise she would be locked up for the night, after which his men conducted her without the Palace.

On the place outside Olga Zanelli was liberated with a further caution to behave herself. It was snowing a little, and a bitterly cold wind was blowing, and as she had eaten but little that day the cold air began to make her feel faint. Over the way was the tavern bearing the sign of the Golden Lamb. She crossed the square and entered the establishment ; the rooms upstairs were empty, for the hour for suppers had not as yet begun. She took a seat at the table near the window, the very table at which many years ago she had sat with her father to sup after her successful *débüt* at the Victoria Theatre.

The waiter came and asked her what she would take. She replied that she did not care what he brought her, she was very cold and merely wanted something to eat. He went to procure her some soup and wine, and when he had turned his back Olga

Zanelli covered her face with her hands and burst into tears.

How many things had happened to her since the night she had supped at this very place with her father ; how full of hope she was then ; how bright the future seemed to her. She remembered how her father had drunk success to her career ; how he had prophesied in his enthusiasm that she would acquire wealth and fame and eclipse Taglioni as a dancer. What had come of all these hopes ? Nothing. It was true no doubt that for a moment she had possessed wealth, but what satisfaction had it brought her ? She had very soon lost it, and not only it but her child and her lover as well. How she wished she could be a child again. How happy she was in those days when she danced on the stage of the Victoria Theatre, and how delighted she used to be when Pietro Zanelli gave her a word of praise and told her that she was making progress ; and then the suppers she was occasionally allowed to have with her father when he had made more money than usual, how pleasant they were ; how boisterous and full of fun he would be ; how pleased with everything, and how proud of his daughter and her good looks. Then the excursions into the forest on holidays, and the romping about there with her father and her cousin Heinrich. Pleasant souvenirs these of bygone days which would never return. She had chosen the short path to wealth, and what had it brought her ? Misery. She was now the abandoned mistress of a man and despised by the world. How much happier would she have been could she have remained true to her art ;

she might have had to struggle against many hardships, but then there would always have been the solace of looking forward to where fame was waiting for her. To love was good, but to work and to struggle was nobler; she had loved—loved with a deep passion which had left its scar upon her heart and brought along with it tears and unhappiness.

The waiter returned with some food and wine, and seeing her distress asked her what was the matter with her. She replied that she had met with a great loss, and that she wished to be alone; so he shrugged his shoulders and left the room, muttering to himself that she was no doubt a woman who had had a row with her lover and was crying in consequence.

Left again to herself Olga Zanelli allowed her mind to dwell on every incident of her life with Count Klinkenstein, a union which had lasted several years, and which had been happy in every respect; she could only recollect one quarrel during all that time, and that one had not been of any importance. Why should all this happiness be brought so suddenly to an end? Had she deserved such a fate?

Occupied with such thoughts time seemed to Olga Zanelli to pass very quickly, and the room where she was began gradually to fill with men and women of the middle class who had dropped in to have a little supper after having been to the play. Their loud and merry laughter jarred on her nerves; she called for her bill, and having paid it left the establishment.

Outside it was snowing steadily, but nevertheless Olga Zanelli continued walking up and down in front of the Palace. She could not tear herself away from

the spot; it had a fascination for her; she was at least near to Count Klinkenstein; and when the wind blew through the high portals of the Palace, bringing to her ears the sound of the music, she would gaze at the brilliantly illuminated saloons above, and would allow her imagination to picture to her mind her faithless lover dancing at that very moment with some fair creature whom he was destined to marry. She would wait till the ball was over and watch for him coming out of the Palace, then she would throw herself at his feet and implore him to return to her.

She was growing tired with standing. Close by on the bridge over the river was the famous equestrian statue of the Great Elector. She went and sat at its base. It was cold sitting and waiting there, and though she drew her furs close together still the wind penetrated through them, and she began to shiver and to grow depressed.

A man passed by and offered to take her home. She crouched closer to the monument and begged him to go away. He passed on, after having indulged his spleen at being refused by uttering a coarse jest.

Was the fate in store for her that she would become little better than one of those unfortunates for which she had just been taken? If so, thought Olga Zanelli to herself, it were better to have done with life at once, and save herself from all the misery and degradation which might be in store for her. She had no friend in the world; her child, the one joy which she thought might have been left to her, had been taken away. Could a young woman like her continue to live alone?

No. Daily meditations in solitude over all she had lost would drive her mad. And what was the alternative to solitude? The companionship of men and ever-changing men; and the idea was revolting to her.

A church clock struck midnight. In another hour or so the court ball would be over, and Count Klinkenstein would come out. If she threw herself at his feet then, was there the slightest chance that he would return to her? Was it not more than probable that he was already engaged to the girl his family wished him to marry, and that therefore it would be almost impossible for him to break off the match? Then what was the most she could hope for? To share Count Klinkenstein's bed with his wife; to remain his mistress while he was a married man. What would that mean in the long run? Misery to herself, misery to him, misery to his wife. If she was to continue to be his he must be hers, and hers alone and entirely. She would not share him with any one.

A policeman came up to her and bade her go home, and not loiter about so near the Palace. She answered meekly that she would obey directly; but she felt as if all the world was against her, and that she could not hope for any more peace on earth.

Go home indeed! Go home to see the dead body of her child laid out on the bed! No, she would not go—she felt she could not go. She had kept the vow she had made when she had given herself to Count Klinkenstein—she had been true to him; why then live and run the risk of proving false, even as he was proving himself false to her? She had loved him, and loved him still so intensely that now that he was lost

to her she felt that it was better to die ; better to go into the unknown and rejoin her child.

She saw the policeman coming again towards her.

She rose as if seized by a sudden inspiration, then exclaimed aloud, "He asks for his freedom—he shall have it. It shall not be said that I have stood in the way of the man I love. May his life be happy, and may God have mercy upon me for what I am about to do !"

Quickly she raised herself on to the parapet of the bridge ; there for a moment she stood erect, as if undetermined to leap over. Presently a great gust of wind swept round her, sending a tremor through her furs, and blowing away like dust the snow-flakes which had gathered on them ; then slowly she bent forward and disappeared into the darkness. A dull thud and the sound of the ice breaking on the river announced what had happened ; and the Great Elector, impassive on his brazen horse, saw another of his subjects passing the way of all things.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

COUNT KLINKENSTEIN came out of the Palace arm in arm with his cousin, the young Count Eckstein, and following them were Count Bernstein and some other officers. They crossed together the great square, feeling merry and full of laughter, for the ball, the music, the supper, the sight of pretty women, and for Count Klinkenstein the fact that he had just been accepted by his cousin, the Countess Nelly, had infused into them all a spirit of delightful intoxication; they were in good humour with everything and everybody.

A little way off a crowd of people were hurrying along; as they were coming towards them the officers stopped to let them pass, and to see what had brought so many people together. In front came a policeman; as he approached Count Klinkenstein asked him what had happened.

He replied rather laconically, and as if it were quite a common occurrence, "It is only another girl, no doubt of the unfortunate class, who has just thrown herself into the river. We have recovered the body, and are taking it to the hospital. There is little doubt that she is dead."

"Let us see what she looks like," said Count Klinkenstein to his companions; so they pressed through

the crowd to get a good view of the tragedy which had taken place.

The men who were carrying the stretcher had laid it down for a moment to rest their arms. A gas lamp was burning close by, and shed a lurid light over the corpse. In laying down the stretcher, the furs which had been thrown over the dead woman had fallen aside a little and exposed the face. With curiosity Count Klinkenstein bent forward to get a look at the dead girl, but he had no sooner caught sight of her face than he reeled back, and had it not been for the young Count Eckstein, who seized hold of him, he would have fallen down.

“What is the matter with you?” he asked of his cousin anxiously.

Count Klinkenstein did not reply ; he turned deadly pale, and made a great effort to master himself ; but after a struggle of a few seconds his feelings got the better of him, and sending forth a cry which rang through the square, he threw himself upon the corpse, exclaiming, “It is Lolo ! Lolo ! and I have killed her !” Then he covered the lips of the dead girl with kisses, as if he thought he could thereby restore life into the dead body, and he began sobbing aloud, and calling down on himself all manner of reproaches and curses for the death which he had caused.

In silence and awe the crowd stood around, watching the handsome young officer in his court dress kneeling in the snow by the dead body of the girl in paroxysms of despair ; and the bystanders whispered to each other that it was a love tragedy, and they pitied him.

There was, however, one person present who felt no

pity for Count Klinkenstein, and that was his cousin. After the first moment of bewilderment at the extraordinary conduct of his relative, the young Count began to feel all the blood of the Ecksteins boiling in him. He had but lately joined the Guards ; he did not know Olga Zanelli, and had but vaguely heard of a mistress his cousin had once had. To see the man who had just proposed to his sister, and been accepted by her, performing strange antics by the side of the dead body of an unfortunate girl in the sight of a crowd of some two hundred Berlin loafers was an insult to his sister which he could not brook. Clutching hold of Count Klinkenstein by the collar of his coat he pulled him away from the corpse, shouting at the top of his voice, " You are the man who proposed to my sister ! well, you shall never marry her. I will tell her everything. You are a blackguard !—do you hear me ? It shall never be said that the man who married a Countess Eckstein was seen howling in public over the dead body of a prostitute."

With an effort Count Klinkenstein rose to his feet ; he was trembling all over, and there was a wild look in his eyes ; turning round to the officers behind him he asked, " Who called the dead girl a prostitute ? "

" I did," answered Count Eckstein, indifferent as to the consequences his reply might bring upon him.

" Then you are a liar ! " replied Count Klinkenstein, firmly and deliberately, and he struck his cousin in the face.

The young officer's blood was up, and a disgraceful scuffle would have ensued had not the other officers present intervened to prevent any further blows being

exchanged. The police ordered the bearers to take up the body again and to carry it away, and they made the crowd disperse.

"No Eckstein yet received such an insult. You shall hear from me to-morrow. Though you are my cousin I will kill you." He would have said more, but some of his brother officers seized the young Count by the arms and hurried him away.

Count Klinkenstein was leaning against a lamp-post, with his friend Count Bernstein standing near him. The crowd had dispersed ; they were alone. In the distance one could still hear the excited voice of Count Eckstein shouting to his companions that he would be avenged.

"What has happened ? Have I been dreaming, or is it a reality ? Is she dead, Bernstein ?" muttered Count Klinkenstein, who felt dazed and stupefied by what had occurred.

"Poor Lolo !" replied Count Bernstein, wiping away a tear and feeling unable to say anything more. He had known her in her palmy days, and had supped with her numberless times, and he had always had a great admiration for the beautiful girl with the soft voice. It seemed almost incredible that she who had always seemed so merry should have taken away her life with her own hands.

"Come, my dear fellow," said Count Bernstein to his friend, and he gave him his arm and led him home.

When Count Klinkenstein reached his rooms, the servant who opened the door informed him that an excited woman had called some hours before, and had

insisted for a long time on seeing him, saying that his child was dead.

On hearing this Count Klinkenstein staggered ; it was the last blow ; it was too much to bear all at once. In a few moments he had lost the woman he had loved, his child, and all prospect of ever being allowed to marry the Countess Nelly, for he had now to fight a duel with her brother. He let himself fall upon a couch and gave way to despair, crying out now and again that he wished he were dead like Lolo and his child. Count Bernstein felt deeply for his friend, but at that moment he thought it best to remain silent and not to attempt to console him till the fit of depression was over.

Towards early morning Count Klinkenstein grew quieter ; quieter because he felt tired out, broken down, enervated. He rose and went to his writing-table, there laid out were the last letters from Olga Zanelli, letters which had never reached him because he had given strict instructions that they should not be sent to him. He opened them and read them through. There from the beginning was the history of the child's illness ; hurried notes scrawled with a pencil imploring him to come and see the little girl before she died. And these letters had never reached him through his own fault, and the mother of his child had killed herself in consequence.

"Bernstein," he said to his friend, "I feel like a murderer ;" and he placed the letters back into their envelopes, and carefully laid away in a drawer these last mementoes of his long connection with Olga Zanelli.

"Try and get some sleep," said Count Bernstein to his friend, "you will feel better after it. I will return in a few hours, and then we can talk over what is best to be done."

"How can I sleep, Bernstein? The ghost of Lolo would arise and wake me up. I have killed her; how can I forget that? This is the most miserable night of my life; I shall never be happy again."

"Other people have met with as great tragedies as this, my dear Klinkenstein; we must learn to be patient and to bear our lot. Do not give way to despair; you are still young, and there is no reason why you should not yet find consolation and happiness in this world."

"There are impressions, Bernstein, which can never be effaced, but I will not trouble you any more with my woes. There are other matters which must be attended to. I do not feel in a fit state to do anything myself, but if you will help me, my dear friend, I will be ever grateful to you. See to the disposal of Lolo's body and of that of her child; I would like them to be buried at Klinkenstein. Then I must fight this duel with my cousin. I wish it could be avoided, but I suppose it is impossible. It is a painful business; painful for poor Nelly, who I am afraid can never be mine now. Arrange everything with regard to this matter; I will fight with any weapons my cousin likes to select; when it is time to fight call me, I will be ready, and I hope that he will kill me."

So they parted for the moment, and Count Bernstein walked home sad and dejected, meditating over the

strange ending of that Court ball, and paying but little attention to the falling snow or to the pale wintry dawn just beginning to be visible in the east.

That day Count Bernstein was fully occupied in arranging all the details of the duel, and in seeing to the proper disposal of Olga Zanelli's body and of that of her child. The insult which Count Eckstein had received in so public a manner rendered it impossible for any arrangement to be arrived at by which a duel would have been avoided. No Prussian officer could hope to remain in his regiment after receiving a blow in the face, such as had been administered to Count Eckstein, without calling out his aggressor and fighting him.

It was quite early in the morning of the following day when the bell at Count Klinkenstein's lodgings was rung ; the servant, who was evidently waiting, opened the door at once, and let in Count Bernstein and another officer. Lights were still burning in the apartment, and Count Klinkenstein was reclining on his bed reading a book. It was a beautifully bound little breviary which Olga Zanelli had once given him a long time ago, after an animated discussion they had had on religious subjects. It was the first time it had ever entered into his head to open it and to read it.

"It is time to go," said Count Bernstein, entering the bedroom. "I hope you have been able to get some sleep, and that your nerves are steady !"

"I am quite ready, my dear Bernstein," replied Count Klinkenstein, rising from the bed. "You need be under no apprehension as to the steadiness

of my nerves ; I am so utterly indifferent as to what occurs to me that I shall not be afraid. If I have still a wish left for anything in this world it is that my cousin may kill me, for I am sick of life."

"Do not depress us all by talking in this way, my dear Klinkenstein ; we are not going to lead you out to a butchery, but to a fair duel, and you are bound to do your best."

"I am in your hands," replied Count Klinkenstein, "and I will do whatever you tell me to ; but I cannot hide from you that what occurred after the ball has given me such a shock that I now view the world in a new light ; when one feels guilty of a great crime one begins to long for death." Then he took his friend aside and asked him whether the Countess Nelly knew anything of what was about to take place.

"She knows nothing," replied Count Bernstein ; "your cousin has not spoken a word to his father or to his sister as to what passed between you both after the court ball."

"Thank God !" exclaimed Count Klinkenstein, "she will at least be spared the anxiety of waiting for the result."

The servant brought them some hot tea, and after they had partaken of it and eaten a little food they left the house and entered the cab which was waiting for them at the door. It was still dark, and the street lamps had not yet been extinguished. There was heavy snow on the ground, and the cab creaked and groaned and made but slow progress through it.

"We shall be late in arriving if we do not get

along quicker," remarked Count Bernstein, looking at his watch. "We have a very long way to go;" then he put his head out of the window and yelled at the coachman, who cracked his whip and made the two old steeds he was driving lift up their hind legs in a spasmodic attempt at a canter. Then the three occupiers of the cab relapsed into their former silence, each one of them being fully occupied with his own thoughts.

They drove through the Brandenburg gate; they traversed the Thiergarten desolate at that hour of the morning; they crossed the open country beyond, and then they entered the pine forest, which looked dreary enough in the early morning light. At every breath of wind which stirred the trees great flakes of newly fallen snow dropped from the branches. Slowly and with difficulty the cab penetrated further and further into the forest, for the road was blocked with snow which had not yet been trodden down or cleared away. The coachman on the box was making his whip crack in the crisp and freezing air, and was trying to revive the drooping energies of his tired horses by the strength of the epithets he was hurling at their heads. Suddenly, at a turn in the road, the cab pulled up.

"What is the matter?" shouted Count Bernstein at the coachman; "surely this is not the appointed place?"

The coachman replied that there was a carriage in front of him which had met with an accident, and that the road at that spot being narrow it was impossible for him to pass. Count Bernstein got

out, in very bad humour at this further delay, to see what had happened. He found Count Eckstein, his seconds, and the doctor standing in the snow, and trying to re-fasten the wheel of their carriage which had come off.

"I am very glad to see you," said one of Count Eckstein's seconds, when he noticed Count Bernstein coming towards him; "we were afraid you were ahead, and that we would not be able to catch you up in this broken-down carriage. As you see, we shall have some difficulty in reaching the appointed place; but if you have no objection the duel might be fought somewhere in the vicinity of where we are standing at present. Shall we try and find a suitable spot among the trees?"

"I see no objection to it," replied Count Bernstein; "but I must first ask the consent of my principal." With that he returned to his carriage, and told his friend what was the cause of the stoppage.

Count Klinkenstein replied: "I will fight anywhere you like; it does not much matter to me at what spot in the forest I am killed, only let me stay in the carriage till all is ready."

After some further consultation Count Bernstein and one of Count Eckstein's seconds disappeared among the trees in quest of a spot in the forest sufficiently open to allow the two combatants to face each other without any obstacle intervening between them. In about a quarter of an hour they returned with the news that they had found a spot where some trees had lately been blown down, thus giving the two Counts sufficient open space for their purpose. The

duel was to be a serious one, and it had been agreed that it was to be fought with pistols, the combatants being placed at a distance of twenty-five paces from each other. Six shots were at most to be fired, and the combatants were allowed to take what time they liked for aiming after the signal for firing was given.

The doctor took his box of surgical instruments out of his cab ; instructions were given to the three coachmen to wait, and then the party set out into the forest, Count Bernstein leading the way.

The spot which had hurriedly been selected for the encounter was not one particularly suited for a duel. A recent gale of wind had blown down several trees which had stood in a row, thereby giving enough open space for the two combatants to see each other, but the intervening ground between them was encumbered with trunks of fallen trees and low bushwood. No doubt a more level and open spot in the forest would have been more suitable, but it was difficult to find anything better within reasonable proximity of the carriages, and the seconds had to take into consideration the probability that out of six shots which were to be fired one of the two combatants would be wounded, and that it would be very inconvenient to have to carry a wounded man a long way through the deep snow and uneven ground of the forest to where the carriages had been left.

The seconds set to work at once to measure the ground, for every one felt cold and eager that the whole business should be got over as quickly as possible. They selected the two spots on which the combatants were to stand, then they broke off some branches from

the pine trees, and swept away enough of the snow so as to give each man a good footing. This done they announced that all was ready for the duel.

Young Count Eckstein was very excited, and talked volubly to his seconds ; he had never yet fought a duel, but he did not feel afraid ; the recollection of the outrageous insult he had received from his cousin kept his blood boiling, and he was longing for the opportunity of being avenged on him.

Gravely Count Klinkenstein saluted his cousin, for until that moment they had kept as far away from each other as possible. Count Eckstein felt himself bound to return it, but when he saw his cousin extending his hand towards him he turned his face away and pretended not to notice it. He felt that as a Prussian officer he could not shake hands with an adversary who had so grievously insulted him until they had exchanged shots at each other.

Before going to take up the position assigned to him Count Klinkenstein went up to Count Bernstein, and shaking him warmly by the hand said to him,—

“My dear friend, I am truly thankful to you for all you have done for me, but I would ask you to do me a few more services in case this duel ends fatally for me, and I would not be sorry if it did. If I die see that Lolo and the child are buried at Klinkenstein, and that I am laid by their side. Go to my sister, tell her all you know, explain many things which she may not understand with regard to my conduct, and assure her that the thought which pains me most at the present moment is that I have brought so much sorrow and trouble upon her.”

Count Klinkenstein moved towards his appointed place, but before he had proceeded very far he stopped and turned back, and whispered to his friend : "One thing more I would say to you ; if you see poor Nelly tell her that my last thoughts were about her."

It was a little past eight o'clock in the morning ; the sun which at that hour ought to have risen was still struggling to pierce the dull leaden clouds which hung about the east. The light was therefore bad, and doubly so in the forest, where it found difficulty to penetrate through the tufted overhanging branches of the pines. The duel, however, could not very well be put off to another day or to a later hour, for it was a bitterly cold morning, and waiting would only have depressed everybody ; besides, there was one redeeming point in the situation, that although it was gloomy in the forest, yet the white field of snow made the bodies of the two adversaries stand out well, so that they were able to take a very fair aim at each other.

Everything was now ready. The combatants were in position ; their seconds had handed them the loaded pistols, and had retired to a safe distance. By agreement, Count Bernstein was to give the signal for firing.

The critical moment had arrived ; with a loud and steady voice Count Bernstein called out, "Are you ready?" then seeing that both adversaries were grasping their pistols tightly, he said, "Fire!"

Count Eckstein immediately raised his arm, and hardly giving himself the time to aim pulled the trigger of his pistol. The bullet passed a little above his cousin's head. Count Klinkenstein, who had

remained motionless while he was being aimed at, now quietly raised his weapon and discharged it in the air.

The seconds came forward to remove the pistols, and to replace them by loaded ones. Count Eckstein was very excited. "I will not stand this sort of thing!" he shouted to his seconds; "that man is insulting me again; he thinks I am a boy, and that I am afraid of his bullet, and so, out of bravado, he discharges his pistol in the air. Tell him I will not stand it again; if I challenge him to fight a duel let him do so properly."

His seconds advised him not to make a scene, and tried to calm him, telling him that if he excited himself so much he would be certain to aim wildly; it had its effect, for Count Eckstein was determined to do his best to kill his cousin.

The combatants were again face to face pistol in hand; the seconds had retired, and Count Bernstein gave the command to fire.

This time Count Eckstein was in less of a hurry; he aimed deliberately and fired; his bullet again passed close to his opponent, but did not touch him. "What bad luck I have got," he muttered between his teeth.

There followed a moment of suspense, during which it seemed as if Count Klinkenstein was not going to fire at all; Count Bernstein, seeing his friend's indecision, called upon him to do so, then only did he raise his pistol, and as his cousin had objected to his discharging it in the air, he pointed it on a level with him, but so far aside that the bullet must inevitably pass into the forest.

Count Eckstein noticed it, and with the impetuosity of youth unable to restrain himself, and smarting under this further insult which he thought was being inflicted upon him, he cried : " curse him ! Again he is not aiming at me."

No sooner had the words been uttered than Count Klinkenstein pulled the trigger of his pistol ; a loud report followed, and then to the amazement of every one present Count Eckstein was seen to reel and fall down.

" Good God ! what have I done ? " exclaimed Count Klinkenstein, throwing away his pistol and covering his eyes with his hand, as if he wished to hide from himself the sight of his cousin lying motionless in the snow.

The seconds and the doctor rushed forward. They lifted the fallen man. Blood was streaming from his temple. What had happened was this : the bullet which Count Klinkenstein had fired had struck the bough of a tree, and deflected thereby had penetrated into his adversary's brain.

" It is a hopeless case," said the doctor, after he had examined the wound.

Count Klinkenstein approached, and kneeling in the snow by his cousin's side took his hand, and whispered something into his ear, but he was past hearing. There followed long minutes of suspense, during which no one spoke ; they were all watching the scarcely perceptible breathing of the dying man. Presently Count Eckstein gave a few gentle quivers ; the doctor assumed a solemn look, and after a moment's hesitation closed the eyes of the young officer. Then they all knew that he was dead, and,

uncovering themselves, they remained for a few minutes kneeling in the snow absorbed in silent prayer.

"Poor Nelly," moaned Count Klinkenstein, as he rose and leant on Count Bernstein's arm. Then the two friends walked away in the direction of the carriages, leaving the others to bring the body of Count Eckstein into town.

The drive back to Berlin was a melancholy one, and Count Klinkenstein only broke the silence once, when turning to his friend he said: "My dear Bernstein, since Lolo's death there has been a curse upon me. I shall not live long."

CHAPTER XL.

COUNT KLINKENSTEIN was alone in his rooms. It was still early ; at most two or three hours had passed since he had killed his cousin by an unfortunate accident. His servant had brought him some food, but he had hardly tasted it. The tragic occurrences which had followed each other so rapidly had greatly affected him. He felt dejected and miserable.

How different things would have been, he thought to himself, had he never met Olga Zanelli, and yet how he had loved that girl ; what supreme moments of pleasure he had known with her, and what a price he had now to pay for so brief a snatch of felicity.

Count Bernstein entered the room ; he had been to the old Count Eckstein to break to him the news of the death of his son.

“What did he say ?” inquired Count Klinkenstein, with a look of utter misery on his face ; “did he curse me very much ? How he must hate me ! For all the trouble and care he took of me when I was young and his ward, I have rewarded him by killing his only son.”

“He is a fine man is the old General,” replied Count Bernstein ; “he bore the dreadful news I was the bearer of like a soldier and a gentleman.”

“ Did you tell him everything ? ”

“ Yes, Klinkenstein, I hid nothing from him. It was a painful interview which I have just had with your uncle. I began by informing him of all that took place between you and his son after the court ball. He broke in with the remark : ‘ I suppose you have come to tell me that a duel must take place ? ’ I replied : ‘ It is all over. ’ I saw him turn pale ; he, the warrior who had the reputation of never showing fear in a battle, was trembling at what I had said. I felt reluctant to say anything further, but the old man came up to me and, grasping my hand, said to me, with a voice broken by emotion : ‘ Young man, tell me the truth frankly ; is my son wounded ? ’ ‘ He is dead, ’ I replied. We both remained silent for a time ; then he let go my hand, and crossing his own as he looked up to heaven, said, with a dignity and gentleness of voice, which has left an indelible impression upon me, ‘ God’s will be done. ’ Then he begged me to excuse him, and he retired, for he did not wish me to see the tears which were rolling down his face. I have never pitied a human creature so much as I did the old General at that moment.”

“ Bernstein, did you see Nelly ? ”

“ No ; but on my way back I called on your sister. She was surprised to see me at so early an hour. I told her at once that you had fought a duel and were safe, and then I gently broke to her the details of what had taken place. She was very miserable, and cried a great deal when she heard that you had killed the Countess Nelly’s brother.”

“ It is a wretched business, Bernstein ; the more

I think over it the more impossible it seems to me to realise that Lolo, the child, and my cousin are all dead. I do not know what will become of me now."

"It is an awful tragedy," replied Count Bernstein, with a voice which betrayed emotion, for he was still thinking of the painful interview he had so recently had with the old General.

"Do you think they have told Nelly what has occurred?" asked Count Klinkenstein, after he had been for some time silently gazing at the fire.

"Your sister told me she would go at once to see her, and try and console her for the loss of her brother."

"It is very kind of her," sighed Count Klinkenstein, plaintively; "but what excuse can she make for my conduct? Now I can never marry Nelly, that is evident, my dear Bernstein, so there are no pleasures left for me in this life; none—none. It would be as well for me if I die soon."

"My dear fellow," replied Count Bernstein, "do not give way to despair; you may be blamed for the circumstances which led to the duel, but no one can find fault with the way you behaved once the duel had to be fought. Count Eckstein did his best to kill you, and every one present can bear witness to the fact that you did your utmost to avoid hurting him. He was killed by an unfortunate accident for which you cannot be held responsible; therefore do not be dejected. You are still young, and where there is youth there is hope. Time is the great healer of all sorrows. If the Countess Nelly really loves you she will not abandon you because you have accidentally

shot her brother. Have courage, have patience, and have hope. Make yourself worthy of her, and who can tell that in the future a reconciliation may not take place between you all on the day of your marriage with the Countess Nelly."

"I wish it could be true," said Count Klinkenstein ; "but I am afraid, my dear friend, that you are only building up chimeras to delude me from the reality of things. There are blows which a man cannot forget, and my having killed his only son will prevent my uncle from ever forgiving me."

The news of the duel soon spread in Berlin and produced a great sensation. The evening papers had long paragraphs giving details of what had taken place that morning, as well as graphic accounts of the suicide of Olga Zanelli, who was a personage who had been sufficiently well known and talked about to interest the Berlin public ; nor were the reporters slow in writing up sensational accounts of the fracas which had taken place between the two officers outside the Palace over the dead body of the woman. These tragic occurrences were the sole subject of conversation that night in Berlin saloons, and every one thought it his duty to give his views with regard to them, and to comment upon the causes which had led Count Klinkenstein's mistress to do away with herself, and upon the conduct of the chief actors in the duel.

During the next few days all Berlin court society left cards of condolence on Count Eckstein, but such marks of sympathy could not console him for the loss of his only son. The Countess Nelly was overwhelmed with grief ; she had not only lost her brother, she had

also lost the man she loved and to whom she had but just become engaged to be married. She felt that it was hopeless now for her to try and obtain her father's consent to her being married to her cousin ; being a young girl and in love she felt this blow almost more keenly than the death of her brother. Since that kiss Count Klinkenstein had given her, while they were sitting together in the gallery over the great hall of the Palace, her love for him had matured and grown more intense. She loved him now all the more because everything seemed to be conspiring against him, and because all men were blaming him for his conduct which had driven his mistress to commit suicide, which had been the cause of all these further troubles. She pitied him intensely, because, by an evil fate, he had shot her brother while he tried his best not to do so. She did not hold him responsible for his death.

Immediately after the duel Count Klinkenstein left Berlin for his country seat. He felt he wanted a change, and to get away from his associates and acquaintances after these recent events. Before leaving he wrote to his colonel telling him what had occurred, placing his resignation in his hands.

A few days after his arrival at Klinkenstein the funeral of Olga Zanelli and her child took place. They were buried on an elevated spot in the village churchyard, from which one could see the great park of the castle and catch occasional glimpses of the Elbe. A train from Berlin brought down a crowd of mourners, actors, and actresses, artists of all kinds, and representatives of the press, as well as a large

contingent of officers, friends of Count Klinkenstein, who had all known Olga Zanelli in the days of her fortune, and who had often partaken of her hospitality both at her town house and at her villa at Potsdam.

The day of the funeral it was stormy, and dull, snow-laden clouds obscured the sky. The funeral service was partly read in the large hall of the castle by a Roman Catholic priest who had come from a neighbouring village for the purpose. At the proper moment the coffin, covered with flowers and wreaths, was lifted on to the shoulders of some of the tenants on the estate and borne to the grave. A procession of the mourners formed behind it, at the head of which walked the young Count Klinkenstein. They filed through the gardens, they crossed the village, and mounted the little hillock in the churchyard, where the grave had been prepared. A number of villagers had assembled there, and children sat on the tombstones wondering at what could have brought together so many well-dressed men and women and officers in brilliant uniforms to the funeral of one who was not a member of the Klinkenstein family.

Count Klinkenstein stood uncovered at the head of the grave, while the mourners, three or four deep, grouped themselves around him. He seemed like a man in a dream, noticing nothing. He was thinking of all that the death of Olga Zanelli meant to him; of the break in his existence; of the joys he had known with her, and which it seemed to him impossible for him to renew with any one else.

The priest pronounced the absolution; the coffin was lowered into the grave, and after giving a last look

at the mortal remains of the once brilliant Olga Zanelli, Count Klinkenstein and the mourners departed. One seedily dressed individual, however, remained, and watched, with a look of despair, the grave-diggers finishing their work. It was Heinrich Lazarus: Six months of prison life had greatly altered his appearance; he was now lean and haggard. During his long hours of solitary confinement he had had plenty of time for meditations. The betrayal by his friend had given him a great shock; his youthful illusions about the sacredness of friendship were gone. Now, after the long silence of the prison house, he had re-entered the world with only one hope left in his heart, and that was that some day Olga Zanelli, tired of the gilded life which surrounded her, would come to him with her illusions gone, and then he would console her and make her his wife. The one woman he loved had been taken away from him; life seemed to have nothing more to offer to his broken heart. He remained by the grave till the afternoon, and then reluctantly he left it to catch the train which was to carry him to Rome; his friend Ludwig Krause, the only man who still seemed to have some sympathy for him, had invited him to rejoin him there. He had vague hopes that perhaps in a new land and a new clime, far away from the scenes of all his late troubles, with new interests and associations around him, he might find some rest and peace.

Life at the castle was not gay, but it suited Count Klinkenstein, who had grown very melancholy and sad, and who seemed to take a relish in the contemplation of the mementoes of death. Every day

he would go to the churchyard to see himself that Olga Zanelli's grave was well attended to, and many a time he would seat himself on a tombstone and allow his imagination to conjure up again his past life with the poor girl.

The only person staying at the castle was the old family agent Max Vogel, who had been summoned in haste, for there were many business matters which wanted attending to. Count Klinkenstein gave his man of business instructions to settle his affairs as best he could, and he assured him that he meant in future to live very economically, and that his expenses would be very much diminished now that Olga Zanelli was dead. After long negotiations an arrangement was concluded whereby the Count's debts were to be gradually paid off in a certain number of years, and he was at the same time to enjoy the use of a reasonable income for his personal expenses.

Count Klinkenstein had never been very strong, and the tragic events which had recently occurred, coupled with the fast life he had been leading during the last few years, had greatly affected his health. He felt very low, and occasionally one of his old friends would run down from Berlin to spend a few days with him, and to try and cheer him up.

Two months had passed since the burial of Olga Zanelli, and Count Klinkenstein had not been a single day away from his ancestral home. Spring had begun; the flowers were coming up, and the Count would spend most of his days out of doors, either taking long solitary walks in the forest or sitting in a sheltered spot in the garden to read a book.

One day he received a telegram from Sydney Gray to say that he was coming down to see him. They had not met since they parted on the staircase of the palace at the close of the court ball, which had been the turning-point in Count Klinkenstein's happiness.

That evening, after dinner, as they sat together in the library of the castle, Sydney Gray said to his friend: "My dear Klinkenstein, it is a pity that you should lock yourself up in this place all by yourself; you will only grow melancholy. I know you pretty well, and you do not give me the impression of being a man for whom a solitary existence would be advantageous. You require society and companionship, without them you are apt to get depressed."

"I do not want to be happy now that Olga Zanelli is dead," replied Count Klinkenstein. "A man's character is completely changed by experiences such as I have gone through of late. Formerly I used never to open a book, now I am always reading. Day succeeds day quietly enough, and I do not seem to care very much what they may bring me."

"That is all nonsense," interrupted Sydney Gray; "what has occurred is no doubt tragic enough, but it is no use moping over it all by yourself. You are young, and you have all your life before you; we cannot bring back the dead however much we may regret their loss; therefore it seems to me that what you now want is an occupation which will give your thoughts employment, and which will help to make you forget what you have gone through of late."

"The last thing I want to do, my dear Gray, is to forget; I prefer to ponder on the past, and to recall

to my memory every incident of my life while she, whose portrait hangs on that wall, lived with me. As for taking up a serious occupation, it is quite out of the question. I do not feel at the present moment that I have either got the energy or the inclination to do so."

"You should make an attempt to brace yourself up, and not give way to despair."

"I am not giving way to despair, I am merely indifferent to everything which may happen to me. I do not know of anything in this world which can now excite my interest very much."

There followed a pause, during which they both looked at the log fire without speaking. Presently Sydney Gray looked up and inquired: "By the way, Klinkenstein, do you ever hear anything from the Countess Nelly?"

"Very little indeed; my sister writes to me that she is in the country with her father. Count Eckstein left Berlin with his daughter immediately after the death of his son; they have not returned to town since then, so my sister has been unable to see Nelly of late."

"You do not know at all how she is?"

"My sister only says that, to judge from her letters, she seems to be very sad and lonely."

"Do you think she still cares for you, Klinkenstein?"

"I should hardly think it possible that she does, but I never ventured to inquire."

"Klinkenstein, when women love it takes a great deal to make them change their feelings."

"She must be a veritable angel if she can pardon me." Then he added, after a pause : "It is irritating to think that I have lost her for ever."

"Would you still marry her if you could?"

"Certainly I would, but what is the use of talking about impossibilities?"

"It is no doubt impossible for the present, but if you still both care for each other who can tell what may not happen in the future?"

"Every fool, Gray, can delude himself with impossible hopes; the wise man tries to see things as they really are, and not as he would wish them to be."

"Certainly, but I do not see why if she loves you you should not some day be married to her. Time will soften the animosity with which Count Eckstein naturally regards you at present."

"I should think I shall have to wait a long time before that takes place. Perhaps we will be married when Count Eckstein is dead and Nelly and myself are old."

"I do not see why you should have to wait as long as that; when a woman is in love she generally succeeds in having her own way."

"I only hope she will have hers," muttered Count Klinkenstein; and the two friends again lapsed into temporary silence.

"Why do you not travel, Klinkenstein?" said Sydney Gray suddenly, as if he had been seized with a bright idea.

"Where should I go to, I should like to know? I am just as well here as anywhere else."

“No, you are not, you want change ; any one who sees you can tell you that. The longer you stay locked up here by yourself the more dissatisfied you will get with everything. Travel ; why not go round the world ? The sight of new scenes will help to cure you of your melancholy. The world is large ; the more you travel about in it, the more convinced you will become that our sorrows are after all but puny, and that what may be a tragedy in Berlin is of very little interest to the rest of humanity ; you will get to judge things with more sobriety and calmness, and to take a proper view of their proportions. I quite understand that you do not like to return to Berlin just now ; travel, therefore ; when you return, say in a year’s time, you will find that much has been forgotten and much forgiven ; perhaps you will be able to re-enter the army, to lead an active and sensible life, and to marry your cousin.”

“It is an idea,” replied Count Klinkenstein, who had been listening attentively to his friend ; “but, my dear Gray, I do not think that I have got the energy in me at present to undertake so long a journey ; anyhow, I will think over your suggestion.”

The next day Sydney Gray returned to Berlin, where his diplomatic duties called him.

During the next few weeks the idea which Sydney Gray had broached simmered in Count Klinkenstein’s mind. There were moments when he felt quite enthusiastic at the proposal that he should travel round the world, while at others he had not the energy even to take a walk. What worried him most all this while was the uncertainty he was in with regard

to the Countess Nelly. Did she still care for him? If he only knew that she did it would raise his spirits, and he would at once start on his long journey in the hope that when he returned she would receive him kindly and hold out a possibility of their being married. But not a word had she written to him, nor even sent him a message through his sister. This silence it seemed to him could only mean one thing. She did not wish to see him any more. Until some certainty was thrown upon this point he felt he could not leave the country.

So things continued till the month of May, when one day, as Count Klinckenstein was walking in the garden, he noticed some forget-me-nots. Then the idea struck him that he might dry some and send them in an envelope to his cousin without any intimation whence they came. If she loved him she would understand what they meant, and perhaps she might likewise let him receive some intimation of her feelings.

He made a small nosegay of these flowers, and having pressed them and dried them, he tied them with a ribbon and sent them to the Countess Nelly by post.

CHAPTER XLI.

EVER since the death of his son, Count Eckstein had lived at his country seat in absolute retirement from the world ; that sad event had depressed him very much, and he now seemed to have lost all interest in things, even in his flowers and his hothouses.

When one morning the post brought the Countess Nelly the envelope containing the forget-me-nots she knew at once that they could only have come from one person, and that her cousin. She was much touched by this mark of his affection, which she inferred had not been changed by recent events. She immediately wrote to the Countess Gisèle to beg her to send Count Klinkenstein a kind message from herself. A few days later she received a reply, saying that he was about to undertake a long journey, and that he was deeply thankful to her that she had not forgotten him. Then the Countess Nelly formed a sudden and decided resolution that she would see him before he started. She wanted to tell him personally that she loved him still, in spite of all that had occurred. She again wrote to the Countess Gisèle, to ask her whether she could arrange for them to meet. She replied that her brother would come to Berlin for a day, and they might meet in her house.

There was only one obstacle to this arrangement, and that was Count Eckstein. How was she to explain to him her wish to go to Berlin for a day? What satisfactory reason could she invent to obtain her father's consent to her going? During the next few days the Countess Nelly occupied her mind in trying to find a solution out of this difficulty, and being able to find none she took the bull by the horns and went one morning into her father's room to tell him the whole truth.

The old General was rather surprised to see her enter with so solemn a face, and asked her kindly what she wanted. She replied that she had something of importance to tell him which he ought to have known long before, but she had kept it back from him because she was afraid that the news of it would pain him.

"Come, my dear Nelly," said Count Eckstein, taking his daughter into his arms and giving her a kiss, "tell me the whole truth; you need not be afraid of me; I have always wished you well, and now that you are the only child I have left there is nothing I would not do to secure your happiness."

"I am in love," said Nelly with an effort, and then she laid her head against his shoulder and began to sob.

Count Eckstein looked grave,—what was coming began to dawn upon him; he put his hand upon his daughter's head, and said to her softly: "Nelly, tell me with whom."

"I love my cousin," she replied, "I have loved him for a long time; he proposed to me the evening of

the court ball ; I told him I loved him, and would be his wife."

"Nelly, why did you not let me know of this before?"

"I was afraid to tell you ; I thought you would say that I must not love him."

"And you are really in love with him, Nelly?"

"Yes," she replied, without a moment's hesitation ; "but I do not ask to be allowed to marry him at once ; I know you would reply that that was impossible : we can wait. But he is going to start on a long journey round the world, and I want to see him before he goes. His sister says I could come and stay with her and then meet him in her house. I must see him. I must tell him that I still love him, and that I will always do so."

The old General was a deeply religious man, of simple faith. He thought to himself that what God has brought about must work for good. He hesitated for a moment, then, giving his daughter a kiss, he said to her gently : "Go, Nelly, and do as you wish."

She wiped her tears, and having thanked him left the room, while the old man went out to look after his daily business.

A few days later Count Klinkenstein met the Countess Nelly in his sister's drawing-room. They felt awkward and were very reserved, and the Countess Gisèle, seeing their embarrassment, left them for a few moments alone.

"It is an awful tragedy which has occurred since we last met," he said, as he went up to her. "Can you forgive me, Nelly, for what I have done?"

She extended her hand to him and replied : " Yes, Edward ; it is a barbarous custom, that of fighting duels, but you did your best not to hurt him. He died by an accident."

Then they sat down close to each other and talked. He told her how miserable he had been ever since these sad events had occurred ; how he had lost all pleasure in life, but that if she still loved him, and would hold out to him the hope that they might some day be united, it would revive his energies and make him again take an interest in the things of this world ; he also promised her that in future he would try and lead a sober and honourable life, so as to efface the pain he had caused so many people by his levity and fast living.

She replied that her love for him would never alter, and she expressed a hope that when he returned from his long journey her father would have softened down and would give his consent to their being married.

After they had sat together for some time the Countess Gisèle returned ; then Count Klinkenstein took his leave, but before he retired the Countess Nelly, unable any longer to restrain her feelings, threw her arms round his neck, and gave him a proof that she was his—a long and loving kiss.

Count Klinkenstein had no definite plan with regard to his journey ; he merely wanted to kill time, to be away from Berlin for a year at the least, and at the same time to have a complete change of associations and surroundings. He first directed his steps towards Russia, where he had relatives. He stayed with them in the country, but the monotony of the

scenery and the dulness of the life there soon bored him. He did not care to retrace his steps to Germany, so he resolved to reach the far East by crossing Siberia. With a sudden burst of energy he prepared for this enterprise ; he obtained the necessary papers to facilitate his journey ; he started for the Ural Mountains, but the sight of the boundless dreary plain before him which he would have to traverse, coupled with the prospect of having to be jolted for three or four months in a tarantass before accomplishing his task, frightened him away from his purpose. His ardour cooled down. Why undergo the hardships of such a journey when no pleasure could possibly be gained from it ? The scenery was tame, the population sparse, dull, and sottish. He gave up the idea. He would turn away from the uninviting North, and go in search of novelty and distraction in the sunny South. He would penetrate to India through Persia ; he would travel leisurely, kill time, and see new lands.

In the Caucasus the difficulties of the journey almost made him lose heart again. But where to go if he did not carry out his purpose ? It was true there was the route by Constantinople, but then there was an embassy at that place, where all the tragic events connected with his name would be known, and he would meet men who would express their sympathy with him or the reverse, and he particularly wanted to avoid all that. He did not wish to meet persons who knew his past history ; it was for that reason that he had turned his back upon Europe for a while.

He resigned himself to his fate ; he hired a dragoman at Tiflis, and bought tents and camp furniture and other necessities for a long journey ; then he embarked at Bakou and set sail for the Persian shores.

It was very early on a cloudless May morning that Count Klinkenstein, coming on deck, first caught sight of the Persian coast. The ship was lying at anchor off the narrow strip of land on which the village of Enzeli is built ; the Caspian Sea, so easily ruffled by sudden gusts of wind, was as still as a lake ; beyond the low houses of the village and the Shah's pavilion, surrounded by its gardens of orange trees, then in full bloom, one could see the great lagoon spreading to the foot of the Elburz Mountains, which were capped with snow. The beauty of the scene before him, the clearness and purity of the atmosphere, the general sense of peace and calm which seemed to prevail, pleased Count Klinkenstein immensely. He landed and paid a visit to the governor of the place, who put some rooms in the Shah's palace at the disposal of the distinguished traveller. In spite of the protests of his dragoman, who reiterated that the place was most unhealthy and feverish, Count Klinkenstein refused to leave it. The masses of roses in the garden, the perfume of the orange blossoms, and the continual humming of the insects delighted him. During the hot hours of the day he would recline on the verandah of the palace and give himself up to dreams and recollections. Towards evening he would take a walk along the shores of the Caspian to watch the evening breeze raising the surf at the

entrance to the lagoon, and admire the sun setting in a blaze of colour behind the jagged crests of the Elburz range. He felt pleased with the solitude in which he now found himself, far away from the turmoil of a great city like Berlin.

Every day the dragoman made strong remonstrances against any further delay in this place, but it took him more than a week before he succeeded in his efforts to persuade Count Klinkenstein to move on. One evening as the sun was setting he entered a boat with his servants, and was rowed across the lagoon; overhead flocks of wild fowl were flying home, and occasionally, as the oars of the boat splashed near some reeds surging above the surface of the lake, a frightened flamingo would flap its wings and fly away. Towards midnight they reached the city of Resht. Here further delay occurred. A caravan had to be got ready to carry the Count's baggage, which was considerable, and when the necessary mules and horses had been engaged Count Klinkenstein made difficulties about moving. A start was finally decided on; the forests and jungles of the province of Ghilan were crossed, and a halt made for the night at the foot of the mountains. The next day the caravan entered the valley of the Sefid Rud, and began the ascent of the Elburz Mountains. The night was passed at a caravanserai in a small village.

On the third day it was very hot, and Count Klinkenstein, who had ridden ahead of his caravan, felt oppressed by the burning heat of a Persian sun. Turning a corner in the road he espied a little way in front of him a grove of trees, so setting

spurs to his horse he put it into a canter, for he felt a strong desire to lie down under their welcome shade.

The place proved to be close to the small village of the name of Rudbar ; there were large plantations of olive trees here, and Count Klinkenstein, getting off his horse, went and stretched himself out under one of them. He fell asleep ; when he awoke he found that his caravan had arrived. The dragoman asked him if he wished to go any further ; the Count replied : " No ; pitch the tent here close to the river. This is a beautiful spot, and I mean to stay here."

That night Count Klinkenstein complained that he felt tired and unwell ; he slept badly, and very early the next morning he rose and looked out of his tent. The air was beautifully fresh ; it was still dark, for the spot where he was standing was inclosed by high ridges of mountains, but their topmost summits had already caught the light of the rising sun. A little way off, on some stones in the river, a group of vultures were flapping their wings as if preparatory to a start in quest of carrion.

Count Klinkenstein felt impressed by the beauty of the scene before him ; he remained standing at the door of his tent till the sun had risen, then he returned to his camp bed and lay down again, thinking to himself that never in his life had he been so impressed by a sunrise, and that this one seen in the mountains was a very different thing from those he had so often witnessed in Berlin coming out of restaurants after a supper-party.

In the course of the day the dragoman came to

take his orders about moving. Count Klinkenstein informed him that he had taken a fancy to the place, and that he intended to stay there until he got tired of it. Over the mountains was the arid and desolate tableland of Iran, so they told him ; why, then, should he be in a hurry to get there ? He merely wanted to kill time, and it seemed to him more agreeable to do so at a pretty village like Rudbar, where at least there were trees and water, than in a barren desert. He had books, so he was not afraid of boring himself. The dragoman thought his master very eccentric, but he had to obey.

That evening Count Klinkenstein felt the first symptoms of fever, and they recurred with more violence during the next few days. His old servant Hans, whom he had brought along with him, as well as the dragoman, urged him to start at once for the upper country. Count Klinkenstein replied that now he was unwell he certainly would not move, and that he had plenty of quinine and drugs to protect himself against a fever. At heart he knew that he was much more ill than he would acknowledge to, and he felt that he had not got the energy to make a move.

During the warm part of the day he would recline in a folding-chair he had brought with him, and the children of the village would come and stare with awe at the mysterious stranger who had settled down among them.

Frequently the head man of the village would present himself, bringing an offering of a lamb, a

chicken, or some fruit, and every time Count Klinkenstein would give him a present in return, and would amuse himself by holding some conversation with him through his dragoman. He was greatly pleased with the simplicity of the man's answers, as well as to find that he had no idea that there were great kingdoms and cities out of Persia. There was a charm at meeting human creatures who had never heard of Berlin, and who, if told of the tragedies connected with Count Klinkenstein's name, would shake their heads and not understand.

Physically and mentally Count Klinkenstein had greatly altered during the last few months. He had become very serious, and was hardly ever seen to laugh. For hours he would sit under the shade of a tree, with a book in his lap, scarcely turning over the pages, but occupied in meditations over the mysteries of our existence. Sometimes his servant Hans would come up to him, and would try to raise his spirits by talking of old times; but the Count would listen to him with a vacant look on his face, as if it rather bored him to be told of unreal things, for every day his past life seemed to him to be more and more of a dream.

There could be no doubt that Count Klinkenstein had caught the marsh fever in the swamps of Resht. He grew gradually worse, and one night he became delirious. Old Hans, who nursed him as if he were his own child, now became seriously alarmed. The Count's system had been so undermined that he had not the power to resist the disease which had attacked him. He was evidently sinking.

During a lucid interval he asked for paper and ink, and with a trembling hand scrawled a letter to his sister, saying that he was dying, and bidding her farewell. He also wrote a few pathetic words to his cousin Nelly, telling her that they would never be united in this world, and expressing an earnest hope that her father would forgive him for the duel which he had been compelled to fight, and for its fatal termination.

Broken-hearted, for he knew that the end was near, the faithful Hans watched through that day by the bedside of his master. The night came, and during its long hours—the stillness of which was only broken by the occasional cry of a jackal and the dull continuous roar of the river, whose waters were then swollen by the melting of the snow in the mountains—Hans had leisure to recall and to meditate over many scenes in his master's life : the rejoicings at his birth ; his childhood in Italy ; his boyhood spent at Dresden, and at his ancestral home ; his arrival at Berlin only a few years ago to enter the regiment of the Gardes du Corps ; the life of pleasure he had then led ; the wild suppers he had given ; the money he had wasted ; the fatal *liaison* with the Italian girl and the tragedy which had ensued ; and then with tears in his eyes he moaned over the miserable and pitiful end of it all, that the last direct descendant of the Counts of Klinkenstein should be dying in a distant land far from his family and his friends. Towards early morning the Count's breathing became very faint. Hans raised his master's head, and waited for the end. As the cold breeze of dawn swept into the tent,

making its sides heave and tremble like a soul in pain, and the boughs of the olive trees overhead to sigh mournfully, Count Klinkenstein expired gently in the arms of his servant, murmuring with his last breath the name of Lolo whom he had so much loved.

EPILOGUE.

THE decade is nearly over, and perhaps the reader, should he have taken any interest in this story, may wish to learn something of the subsequent fate of a few of the chief persons who have played a prominent part in it.

Hans, the faithful servant, with great difficulty brought home the body of his master, and Count Klinkenstein now lies by the side of Olga Zanelli in the little churchyard of the village. By his will he left his properties to his sister for her life, and should she die without children they are then to pass to the nearest male relative of his family. The Countess Gisèle now spends her winters at her villa near Florence and her summers at the Castle of Klinkenstein, where the Countess Nelly is often her guest. When she is at the latter place she never fails to visit in the early morning the graves of her brother and of the unfortunate woman whom he loved, and to see that they are kept tidy, and that fresh wreaths of flowers are placed upon them.

The Countess Nelly felt bitterly the death of Count Klinkenstein, for she loved him with all the ardour of a young girl, and the tragedy of his life threw a halo of romance over her affection for him. For a long time she retired entirely from the world, and

refused to see any but her most intimate friends. It is reported, however, that quite recently, at the earnest entreaty of her father, she has accepted the advances of a young and dashing captain of the Guards, for whom people predict a brilliant career. Let us hope that they may be happy together.

Quite recently the *Pioneer* newspaper, published in Nashville, Nevada, U.S., gave an account of a scuffle which took place at a drinking saloon of that city between the owner of the establishment and some persons who were playing at poker. Revolvers were discharged, with the unfortunate result that a distinguished-looking gentleman of German origin was killed. He was buried the next day with every mark of respect. There are reasons for believing that the keeper of the saloon was none other than Moses Jacobsohn, and the gentleman who met with so untimely a fate Count Immersdorf.

After having betrayed his friends, Bernard Adler was admitted into the detective department of the Berlin police. He has already greatly distinguished himself; his undoubted ability, his industry, his energy, and power of work have won him the regard of his superiors. He is certain to make a career for himself, and there are not a few persons who believe that with a little luck he may some day rise to the exalted position of Prefect of Police.

After the death of Olga Zanelli, Heinrich Lazarus, as already related, went to Rome on the invitation of his friend, the painter Ludwig Krause, and there he has remained ever since. His wants are small, and he succeeds in eking out a living by giving lessons.

Frequently in the early morning you may meet in the gardens on the Pincian Hill a gaunt figure dressed in seedy clothes, and wearing long hair and spectacles. It is Heinrich Lazarus. When he has reached the top of the hill he will stand for a long time silently gazing at the Eternal City at his feet, and meditating, no doubt, over his past life. From time to time he takes out of his breast pocket the miniature portrait of Olga Zanelli which she gave him on one occasion, and contemplates it with tears in his eyes. Presently the clock in the neighbouring church of Santa Maria del Popolo strikes the hour, then he turns away and trudges slowly back to the city, there to go through the drudgery of his daily toil.

THE END.

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